Managing global virtual teams in the London FinTech industry

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DECLARATION SHEET

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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ABSTRACT

Today, the number of organisations that are adopting virtual working arrangements has exploded, and the London FinTech industry is no exception. During recent years, FinTech companies have increasingly developed virtual teams as a means of connecting and engaging geographically dispersed workers, lowering costs, and enabling greater speed and adaptability.

As the first study in the United Kingdom regarding global virtual team management in the FinTech industry, this DBA research seeks answers to the question, "What makes for the successful management of a global virtual team in the London FinTech industry?". Straussian grounded-theory method was chosen as this qualitative approach lets participants have their own voice and offers some flexibility. It also allows the researcher to have preconceived ideas about the research undertaking.

The research work makes the case for appreciating the voice of people with lived experiences. Ten London-based FinTech Managers with considerable experience running virtual teams agreed to take part in this study. These Managers had spent time working at large, household-name firms with significant global reach, and one had recently become founder and CEO of his own firm, taking on clients and hiring contract staff from around the world. At least eight of the other participants were senior 'Heads' of various technology teams and one was a Managing Director working at a 'Big Four' consultancy. They had all (and many still did) spent years running geographically distributed teams with members as far away as Pacific Asia and they were all keen to discuss that breadth of experience and the challenges they faced.

Results from these in-depth interviews suggested that there are myriad reasons for a global virtual team, from providing 24 hour, follow-the-sun service to locating the most cost-effective resources with the highest skills. It also confirmed that there are unique challenges to virtual management and new techniques are required to help navigate virtual managers through them.

Managing a global virtual team requires much more than the traditional management competencies. Based on discussion with the respondents, a set of practical recommendations for global virtual team management was developed and covered a wide range of issues related to recruitment and selection, team building, developing standard operating procedures, communication, motivation, performance management, and building trust.

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Abbreviations

UK ……………………   United Kingdom

NY…………………….   New York

IT………………………   Information Technology

Acknowledgement

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Focusing on the London FinTech industry, this study explores practices and experiences of managers who run global virtual teams. Good practices are identified, and areas of improvement are highlighted.

This chapter provides an overview of the research, including the background of the study, a statement of the problem, aims and objectives, research questions, research gap and rational for this research. Limitations of the study will also be discussed. The research approach chosen for this study was grounded theory as it offers a thorough explanation of the complexities of the organisational management process (Locke, 2001). An overview of the research outline will be presented at the end of chapter.

1.2 Background to the research

A virtual team is defined as a group of employees working toward common goals, via their own, independent tasks, and distributed across geographical boundaries and/or time zones (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). Since the 1950's scholars have anticipated that new communication technologies could enable access for remote working, allowing people to work in flexible spaces away from the traditional office (Jones, 1957, 1958). Today, the number of organisations adopting virtual working arrangements has exploded, with approximately 1.3 billion virtual workers worldwide, almost forty per cent of the global workforce (Lucy et al., 2017).

In line with rapid changes in organisational life, the virtual working arrangement has changed its features and boundaries over time. There is a move away from assuming virtual teams are merely the 'opposite' of co-located, or face-to-face teams, toward

virtuality as a latent feature of all teams and, instead, more attention given to the degree of virtualness (Martins et al., 2004). In other words, working in a remote team is nowadays seen as normal instead of an exception (Mukherjee, Lahiri, Mukherjee, and Billing, 2012).

Virtual teams are being recognised as a permanent feature of organisations and more business are building virtual teams or adapting the role of current teams to maintain competitiveness and react faster to volatile markets (Mukherjee, Lahiri, Mukherjee, and Billing, 2012). They are becoming more popular, according to Hoegl and Muethel (2016).

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills stressed that future work will be carried out over networks and with more interdependencies. All staff will need to develop skills so they can work with people in many different disciplines virtually (Störmer et al., 2014) and the ability to manage and work within virtual teams will be a core requirement for workers of the future. The FinTech industry is no exception. Recently, FinTech companies have expanded their use of virtual teams in order to allow geographically dispersed workers to engage with each other. This is rapidly proving to be cost-effective and has improved the speed at which employees can induct into teams and become productive.

More than 10 percent of the FinTech market share globally is currently based in the UK and worth over £11 billion per year to the country's economy. FinTech investment stood at $4.1 billion in 2020 which is more than the total investment of the next 4 European countries combined (HM Treasury, 2021). As Kalifa (2021) posits, the UK FinTech sector has grown due to its ability to recruit and retain skilled employees without geographical restriction. Productivity and, therefore, revenue are driven up because companies can seek out the talent that they need across the globe regardless of political uncertainty, immigration law and other regulations that may hinder employee re-location.

As the capital of the United Kingdom, London has long been heralded as the financial technology capital of the world, and holds significant importance to the UK economy. For London to retain its position as a world leader in financial technologies, global

collaboration as well as virtual teams play an important role. An effective global virtual team management framework, which enables the sector to be more agile and responsive to the changing business and political environment, would significantly contribute to this objective. There is a need for more research to gain a better understanding of this arrangement and to master the challenges of managing global FinTech virtual teams.

1.3 Problem statement

"Research problem explains what are you going to investigate" (Ghauri and Grønhaug, 2010, p.44). In other words, how research problems are framed drive research activities.

Many scholars have carried out extensive literature review on virtual teams over the past decades and share a view that the use of virtual teams provides numerous benefits to organisations seeking competitive advantage in increasingly global marketplaces (Lundquist, 2004; Travica, 2005; de Guinea, Webster, and Staples, 2005; Ale Ebrahim, Ahmed, and Taha, 2009; Walsh, 2019; Mihalache, 2021). For example, virtual teams allow organisations to group talent together from across the world, combining the best expertise with deep, local knowledge of the most promising markets (Furst et al., 2004; D'Souza and Colarell, 2010; Berry, 2011; Singh, 2013; Neeley, 2019). They offer organisations advantages such as reducing redundancies, lowering costs and discontinuities associated with global collaboration (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010; Schulze and Krumm, 2017; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). They enhance organisational speed, flexibility, agility, and this makes them more responsive to a changing market (Algesheimer et al., 2011; Gressgard, 2011; Chamakiotis, Dekoninck, and Panteli, 2013; Yao, Liu and He, 2021).

There is no doubt that virtual work arrangements provide a range of benefits to organisations, yet companies are faced with increased challenges and potential pitfalls (Ale Ebrahim, Ahmed, and Taha, 2009; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). While it seems to be

easy to implement virtual teams, as they can be built without needing to consider time of day or distance (Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010; Schulze and Krumm, 2017), virtual teams also pose immense management challenges which are different from their non-virtual counterparts. For instance, managing performance and mentoring without traditional forms of feedback, or leading and coordinating in a cross-cultural environment, etc. These are significant barriers to successful virtual team performance (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; McDonough, Kahn and Barczak, 2001; Smith and Sinclair, 2003; Egeland, 2010; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020).

Despite the numerous benefits linked with high performing virtual teams, it is claimed that "there is growing evidence that virtual teams fail more often than they succeed" (Furst et al., 2004, p.6), or to be more specific, less than one in three virtual teams actually succeed (Levasseur, 2012). Quisenberry (2018) explained that the extremely high failure rates of virtual teams can be due to various challenges such as a lack of knowledge-sharing, reduced communication, and team members who lack self-managing and virtual teaming experience.

Clark, Marnewick, and Marnewick (2019) conducted a literature review that analysed 135 articles from peer-reviewed English journals and found that negative leadership qualitities is a direct failure factor. Competence and the experience of virtual team leaders, particularly management experience, have a profound affect on the team's productivity and ultimate success (Verburg, Bosch-Sijtsema, and Vartiainen, 2013; Iorio and Taylor, 2015). However managers put in charge of virtual tams are often not prepared for leadership in virtual teams (Hertel et al., 2005).

Researchers found that one of the biggest challenges in implementing virtual team working is to develop effective global leaders (El-Sofany, Alwadani, and Alwadani, 2014). Roffy Park Management Agenda 2017 stressed that the "workforce [is] increasingly virtual, but

managers are ill-equipped", with more than half (53%) of managers surveyed thinking their organisation lacks the skills to manage virtually.

Developing the skills of a virtual workforce is crucial (Lucy, Wellbelove, Poorkavoos and Hatcher, 2017). If a global organisation wants to take advantage of the economies available when operating globally and develop a global mindset across the company, then building expertise in running and managing virtual teams is critical (Govindarajan and Gupta, 2001). However, little is known about global virtual management, i.e. how best to attract, select, develop, motivate and retain talent that is involved in global virtual collaborations (Baruch, 2001; Schweitzer and Duxbury; 2010; Zimmermann, 2018).

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Research

This research aims to contribute to the existing virtual management literature and offer practical values for management practices, and develop an effective response to the challenges in managing global virtual teams faced by organisations in the London Fintech industry. This work also attempts to explore practices and experiences of managers when managing their global virtual teams and to highlight areas of good practices as well as areas of improvement. In the course of investigation, the researcher will attempt to examine competencies which global virtual managers need to manage a virtual FinTech team successfully. It is expected that findings during this research will contribute to the development of a practical framework or set of recommendations towards effective global virtual team management.

The above aims raise the following key research objectives:

(1) Gain a better understanding of current global virtual management arrangements in the London Fintech industry

(2) Determine specific management issues and challenges faced by global virtual teams

(3) Gain further insight to the practices and experiences of managing global virtual teams

(4) Identify critical success factors: what competences does a global virtual manager need to excel at managing a global virtual team?

(5) Create a set of recommendations for managing virtual teams more efficiently

1.5 Research questions

The primary research question to be answered is: What makes for the successful management of a global virtual team in the London FinTech industry?

The following sub-research questions will also be investigated:

1. What are business drivers for global virtual management?
2. What is different about managing a global virtual team?
3. What are the key issues and challenges that managers in the London FinTech industry are faced with when managing global virtual teams?
4. What are the competencies managers need to be effective in the virtual world?
5. How can a practical framework for global virtual team management be produced to enhance virtual team performance?

1.6 Research gap and rational for the study

In the twenty-first century organisations are becoming increasingly global with virtual teams working together, yet physically apart (Greneir and Meters, 1992). This global reach means a number of researchers choose to focus entirely on "global virtual teams" (e.g., Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000; Odenwald, 1996). However literature review reveals critical limitations of currently available studies, for example participants, settings and methods.

Powell, Piccoli and Ives (2004) presented an overview of literature on virtual teams and

pointed out that much research in virtual teams was performed in controlled settings with almost all papers having used student teams with an average of four members, performing artificial tasks with unrealistic time limits. Zhang et al. (2009) conducted a study based on student teams working on class projects and acknowledged that some questions did not apply to corporate virtual teams. More recent virtual team research carried out by Iorio and Taylor (2015), which aimed to explore how engagement and interactions thought of as indicators of effective leadership can be predicted from prior experiences, still used twenty graduate students in four simulated virtual projects. One could argue that while results from controlled experiments using students may be useful to some extent, unfortunately the reality of professionals working in ongoing global virtual teams is very different from controlled settings built with short-term, temporary student groups, not to mention that experiences and perceptions of a student would be far different from those of an experienced global virtual manager.

Caulat (2010) reviewed virtual work literature and presented several arguments. In particular, she pointed out that research in virtual teams is often limited to one organisation, for example, Buhlmann (2006), Joshi, Lazarova and Liao (2009). In most cases, methods of research in virtual teams seem to be restricted to guided interviews or online questionnaires. Most articles come up with their theories first, then seek to confirm them through research (e.g. Eichenberg, 2007; Kayworth and Leidner, 2001/2002). In the nineties, most literature centred on finding the right way of working virtually and finding the right people for the team to ensure productivity (Powell et al., 2004). Later on, in the early 2000's more articles began to focus on performance management in virtual teams and developing trust with, maybe, a couple of pages at the end talking about virtual leadership. Many of the studies on leading geographically dispersed teams is superficial and theoretical (Remdisch, 2006), "far from being sufficient" (Caulat, 2010, p.8)

Furthermore, available field-based investigation mainly focused on long-term non-global

virtual teams (Kirkman et al., 2004; Powell et al., 2004). There have been relatively few efforts to shed light on global, long-term virtual teams, with a lack of attention to virtual team leadership issues such as the role of managers and managerial structures, or functional requirements of virtual team leaders, and the unique skills needed to be able to lead a virtual team effectively (Powell, Piccoli, Ives, 2004; Malhotra et al., 2007; Mukherjee, Lahiri, Mukherjee, and Billing, 2012).

When conducting the research "what makes an excellent virtual manager", Roffey Park Institute bemoaned that "it is true to say that we found no single writer who had sought to answer our essential research question" (Smith and Sinclair, 2003, p.7). When attempting to assess literature on virtual teams, the researcher also found few articles throwing light on this issue at the time this research is conducted. Given the dynamic growth of technology and the widespread of global working arrangement, this is somewhat surprising.

Researchers (i.e. Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010; Zavolokina, Dolata and Schwabe, 2016) posited that study of virtual organisations remains in its infancy and still maturing. There is still much to learn, especially in a continually changing global landscape. There are many questions around how effective virtual teams are as more and more organisations start to form them. How involved should managers be in these teams? What techniques and practices can be used to ensure they are productive and sustainable? (Kerber and Buono, 2004; Gluesing, 2020). A thorough understanding of managing global virtual teams, challenges and key required competencies is still lacking.

There have been many calls for further studies on the topic but research related to global virtual management has been limited. This research aims to help plug this gap. With participants who are mangers of global virtual teams in the UK FinTech industry, the study has a significant advantage in response to the question about effective global virtual working management, drawn based on lived experiences of those who actually mange

dispersed teams with members located across the world.

As mentioned above, there is evidence-based scepticism about the success of virtual teams (Furst et al., 2004, p.6; Levasseur; 2012). Yet, issues that global virtual team managers have to deal with are even more challenging. There are language issues and cultural issues to overcome, it's not just about geographical separation and time zone differences (El-Sofany, Alwadani, and Alwadani, 2014). It would be sensible to think that no one else could comprehend these issues more than those who manage global virtual teams every day. Global virtual managers should be included in studies as research objects for their actual experiences and skills in managing global virtual teams, however, it is notable that previous research mainly focused on the experience and perception of employees instead of managers. Whilst it is undeniable that understanding employees' views about virtual working arrangement is essential, it is logical to expect that managers and staff-level employees will hold different perceptions and expectations towards particular management issues. For example, scholars have proven that there are remarkable perception gaps in customer expectation and service quality between managers and executives (Parasuraman, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1985; Luk and Layton, 2002). This is because employee and managers vary on many characteristics, with different positions, different levels of organisational resource access, different responsibilities. Verburg, Bosch-Sijtsema, and Vartiainen (2013) found that the success of the virtual team is heavily dependent on the experience of their leader. Iorio and Taylor (2015) confirmed that the effectiveness of project leaders can depend on their previous experience which, in turn, contributes to the success of the virtual team.

In general, literature review suggested that with so many issues to address, practitioners and researchers alike need a clear but complete framework for understanding and improving global virtual team management process. Taking a closer look into the London FinTech industry particularly, given the dynamic growth of virtual teams in the field, it is

somewhat surprising that there are few studies attempting to shed light on experiences of managers in global virtual teams. To this end the researcher studied FinTech-based organisations with a global working arrangement. Participants were senior FinTech managers, with over half of them having more than ten years' experience in managing global virtual teams. The present research attempted to "explore novel approach that stem from an understanding of the idiosyncrasies of the virtual environment", which has been scarce in the current literature as Powell et al (2004, p.18) suggested. The purpose was to capture a comprehensive understanding of global virtual team management from lived experiences of those doing it every day. Findings from this research might help researcher and practitioner gain a deeper understanding about the current practices of global virtual team management in the UK FinTech industry. In addition, these findings could enable multi-national companies in general, and UK FinTech companies in particular, to identify a set of competencies and practices for managing global virtual teams effectively. Consequently, the gap between academic perception of global virtual management and the management reality can be filled.

1.7 Methodology

As Caulat (2010) indicated, most virtual team researchers start with a theoretical viewpoint and then test their hypotheses through research. The common research methods are online questionnaires and/or semi-structure interviews. There is a call for exploratory research on virtual working to build a basis for a great understanding of this new type of work that is dependent on technology (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram and Garud, 2001).

A review of research methodology literature suggested that the study is conducive to grounded theory because results will be based on a number of individuals' interpretations of, and experience in running, global virtual teams (Isabella, 1990; Locke, 2001; Suddaby, 2006). Therefore, the researcher decided to separate from previous approaches to this topic

and use Straussian grounded theory as the methodology for this study because it allows participants to have their own voice (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and permits the researcher to have some preconceived ideas about the research undertaking. This strategy permitted the researcher to identify key issues, critical success factors, and additional research questions.

Research includes interviews from London FinTech experts, all of whom have considerable management experience in London-based FinTech firms and have reached significant levels of seniority in their careers. Most were 'Head' of their respective function, and all had lengthy careers that began as individual contributors, through to managers of local teams and then into management of global virtual teams. In particular, one respondent was a Managing Director of a 'Big Four' consultancy while another had founded and become CEO of their own firm. All were able to reach into their significant experience and contribute to valuable discussions on virtual team management.

Results from theses in-depth interviews, lasting around an hour each, allowed the researcher to identify a set of "best practices" and offer guidance for global virtual team management.

1.8 Limitations

This study focuses on the London FinTech industry and, while there is much that can be applied universally, anyone using this study as research material should be aware that ways of working and working culture will differ between industries and geographies and future researchers should not assume all that is learned in this study will automatically apply everywhere. In addition, the sample-size for this study may seem modest, but to truly examine experiences in virtual management, particularly when comparing to co-located management, participants must have significant maturity and experience, something which can take many years to accrue. Obviously, this means the sample size is reduced, but in a

study like this the researcher is more interested in detail and quality of each participant's experience, not the volume of responses.

It is noted that only one among ten participants was female. While this might reflect the gender inequality in the FinTech industry, where less than thirty per cent of the workforce is female (EY, 2017a), the quality of research could have been improved and more inclusive with more female interviewees.

In addition, the study was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, so most interviews were carried out over video calls, with all the disadvantages and limitations of technology. However, it could be said, that as a study of virtual teams, this virtual setting with all of its characteristics and technical quirks actually mirrored the everyday interactions between the participants and their virtual teams, thus triggering the recall of context-dependent memories.

1.9 An overview and outline of the dissertation

Chapter One provides an introduction to this study, consisting of an overview and a description of the research background. A brief review of global virtual teams and the London FinTech industry is then presented to justify the research objectives and context, as well as explain the significance of this research. This is followed by a critical overview of available literature on virtual teams and a description of the research methodology. The chapter concludes with a description of the limitations of the research.

Chapter Two outlines the history of FinTech in general and London FinTech in particular. This section also discusses the importance of global virtual working practices to the London FinTech industry. This is followed by a review of the literature relevant to virtual team management such as the development of virtual teams, definitions, characteristics, advantages and disadvantages. Key issues such as trust, communication, and virtual leadership are also discussed.

In **Chapter Three,** the design and method used in this research will be discussed, starting with a brief description of the nature and purpose of this study, then justification of the chosen research method and design. The primary phases in the research process, data collection and data analysis techniques are then presented step-by-step. Issues regarding validity, reliability and ethical considerations are also presented

Chapter Four provides answers for research question One and Two with key findings about the business drivers and differences in managing a global virtual team. A further discussion about cost-saving is also presented based on the question: are virtual teams really a cost-saving?

Chapter Five identifies key issues and challenges in managing a global virtual team, which relates to research question Three. By presenting details of the reality of managing global virtual teams based on the perceptions and experiences of FinTech senior managers with up to seventeen years' experience, the chapter provides an intensive look into the primary issues of communication, cultural differences, team building, trust, time zone differences, technology-related problems, and problems regarding oversea travel. This chapter also answers research question number Four: "what are the competencies that managers need to be effective in the virtual world?".

Chapter Six represents Recommendations and Contribution. With insightful implications for practices, this chapter was developed based on viewpoints and recommendations from global virtual managers, people who have lived and worked experiences in this field.

Finally, **Chapter Seven** wraps up with discussions around the contributions and limitations of this study, as well as opportunities for future research.

Figure 1, below, represents a diagram of al chapters in this dissertation. It helps both the researcher and readers to visualise the directional flow and the vital research processes.

Phase	Element of each phase	Chapter description
Analysis of the literature and identify the gaps	**Literature review** - FinTech - Global virtual teams - Characteristics of virtual teams - Advantages and Challenges of virtual teams - Trust - Communication - Virtual Leadership	Chapter 1: Introduction Chapter 2: Literature review
Analysis of data	**Methodology** - Research design - Research methodology - Data collection: in-depth interviews and observation	Chapter 3: Methodology
Synthesis	**Data analysis** - Open coding - Axial coding - Selective coding	Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis: Research question One and Two
Contribution	**Building a story line and discussion** - Reaching Saturation - Literature Comparison Phase - Compare emergent theory with extant literature	Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis: Research question Three and Four Chapter 6: Recommendations and Contribution
	Managing global virtual teams in the London FinTech industry	Chapter 7: Conclusions

Figure 1: An overview of the research outline

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

2.0 Summary

This chapter presented an overall view of the present study, from the background of the problems to the direction of present research. In the next chapter, the readers can find historical information about FinTech development during the past 155 years, including a visual timeline developed by the researcher. Relevant literature regarding global virtual teams that helped to build the foundation for this study will be also discussed in detail, providing a brief yet critical understanding of the key issues.

Chapter 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

A discussion of prior relevant literature is essential for advancing knowledge. This study reviews the current literature to address the question: what makes for the successful management of a global virtual team in the London FinTech industry?

The first part of this chapter covers the development history of FinTech from the late 19th century until today. With a detailed discussion on the important role of the London FinTech industry to the UK economy and its position on the global FinTech map, this section also examines the roles of global virtual working towards the London FinTech industry.

The second part of the literature review sheds the light on the development and definition of global virtual teams. A short table of virtual team characteristics discussed in previously published work is provided to quickly generate an overall understanding of the issue. A range of advantages and disadvantages of global virtual working on different levels: individual, organisational, and societal will also be discussed.

Since the primary research question of this study is "what makes for the successful management of a global virtual team in the London FinTech industry?", in the following sections of this chapter, literature relevant to key issues in global virtual team management such as trust and communication in global virtual teams, and virtual leadership will be presented.

2.2 FinTech

2.2.1 Definition

As a portmanteau that has been originated from the combination of "finance" and "technology" (Shim and Shin, 2015), the term FinTech is generally used to describe various technologies employed to deliver financial services. The birth of the term is considered to be as far back as the 1990s. However, interest in the term did not start to grow until early 2015 (Deloitte, 2017).

Today, a query on Google with "FinTech" as the search term yields 98,500,000 results (Google, 2021a). According to Google Trends, there is a growing trend in the interest in the term FinTech, especially during the last five years. From a flatline near zero in 2010, it rose significantly in 2014 and then reached a peak in 2018, 2020 and 2021 (Google, 2021b), as described in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Google Trend: the search popularity of the term "FinTech"

(Google, 2021b)

As Schuefflel (2016) commented, the term FinTech has achieved wide acceptance throughout the world and is a word already entering common parlance, however, so far there is little agreement on a specific definition of the term. Zavolokina, Dolata, and Schwabe (2016) argued that:

> "There is no universal understanding and definition of FinTech in the research (...)
> Even though the term "FinTech" is in the limelight of hot public debate in fields of

business, finance, and innovations, its meaning still remains ambiguous for most of the people." (p.1, p.2)

The scholars conducted an intensive literature review and suggested that FinTech could be perceived in many different ways, for example, application of information technology in finance, start-ups, services, technologies, companies, digitalisation, industry, product, phenomenon, market, process or business models.

"FinTech" is an amorphous term that can be used differently in various contexts. The Oxford English Dictionary defines FinTech as "Computer programs and other technology used to support or enable banking and financial services. FinTech is one of the fastest-growing areas for venture capitalists*" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019)*. In general, the term FinTech is most commonly defined in terms of specific companies (KPMG, 2017), or as a new type of financial services (KPMG, 2017; Lee and Kim, 2015; Lee and Teo, 2015).

As an evolution of financial services, FinTech is driven by four major factors: technological advancements, behavioural changes in consumers, budget and capital, and regulation (KPMG, 2017). The term describes the digital transformation of financial services, and the development and implementation of modern technologies for enabling or providing financial services (Dapp et al., 2014).

"FinTech" also refers to "firms that use technology to improve competitive advantages of traditional financial services firms by improving efficiencies and driving new products and solutions for customers" or "businesses that use technology to change how financial services are offered to end customers" (KPMG, 2017, p.12). Accenture defines FinTech companies as "those who offer technologies for banking and corporate finance, capital markets, financial data analytics, payments, and personal financial management" (Gach and Gotsch, 2014, p.11).

2.2.2 The evolution of FinTech

FinTech is thought of as a relatively new partnership between financial services and technology, however, finance and technology have been interlinked for centuries (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2016; He et al., 2017; Xing and Marwala, 2018). In the paper "150 years of FinTech: an evolutionary analysis" (2016), Arner, Barberis and Buckley described FinTech as a "new term for an old relationship" (p.22) and distinguished three main eras of the interlinked evolution of financial services and technology.

1866 -1967: From analogue to digital

In the late 19th century, with the availability of the telegraph, railroads, steamships and the first transatlantic cable being laid in 1866, the financial world finally had the infrastructure to develop interconnections across borders (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2015, 2016).

During post-World War I period, different technological innovations developed rapidly. In 1950, credit cards became one of the first FinTech innovations when introduced by Dinners Club (Rona-Tas and Guseva, 2014), following by Bank of America and American Express in 1958 (Markham, 2002), changing how people made transactions and reducing the need to carry cash. The subsequent introduction of a Quotron system in 1960, which provided stock quotes to traders situated far from the trading floor, followed by a global telex network introduced in 1966 (Xing and Marwala, 2018) provided the electronic basis for the FinTech industry to emerge. However, despite these developments, adoption of the new technology was slow during this period (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2015, 2016).

1866	First transatlantic cable
1950	First credit cards introduced
1960	Quotron system
1966	Global telex network

1866 -1967

Geography:
Global/ Developed World
Key factors:
- Technical infrastructure
- Computerisation
- The interlinkage between finance and technology
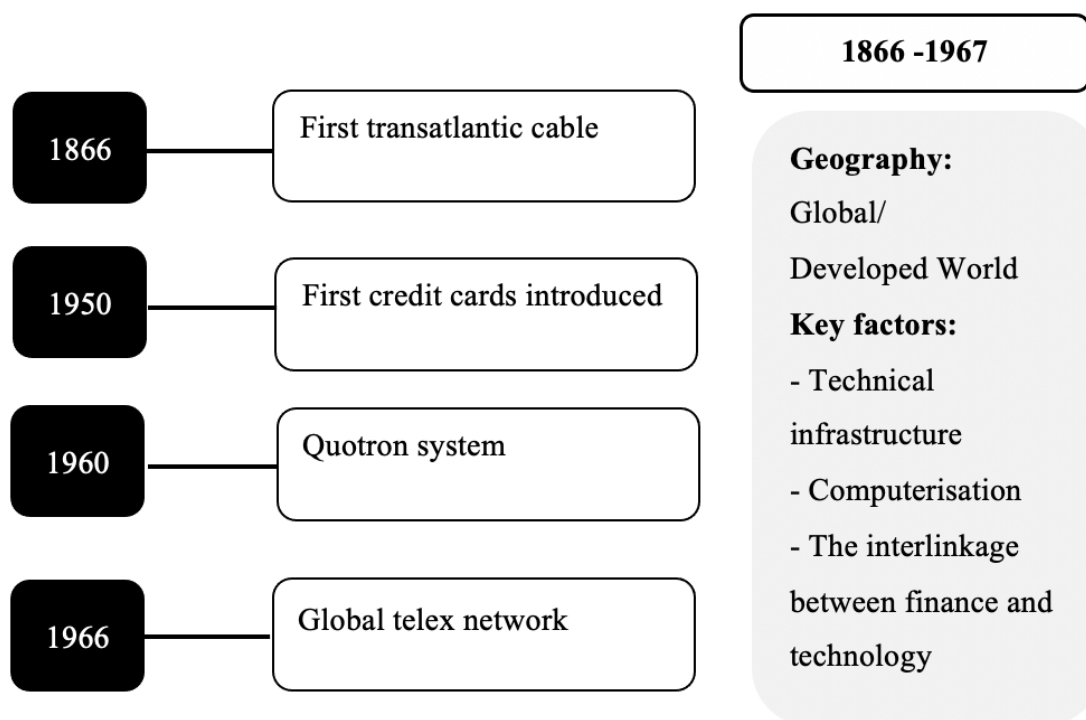
Figure 3: Highlights of FinTech from 1866 to 1967

(Adapted from Arner et al., 2015, 2016; Xing and Marwala, 2018)

1967 – 2008: Digitalisation of traditional financial services

The release of the handheld calculator and the launch of ATMs (Automated Teller Machines) in 1967 by Barclays Bank to replace human tellers and lower the number of bank branches signalled the start of the FinTech era, when financial services moved from analogue-based to digital-based. During the period of 1967 to 2008, financial services sectors were digitalised at a fast pace, driven by the evolution of technology in electronic communications and transaction systems (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2015; Xing and Marwala, 2018). Note-worthy FinTech events during this period are presented as below:

Year	Event
1966	First ATM (Barclays) · First calculator (Texas Instrument)
1968	BACS: The Inter-Computer Bureau was set-up in the UK, which evolved to become the BACS (Bankers' Automated Clearing Services) known today.
1970	CHIPS: the US CHIPS (Clearing House Interbank Payments System) was established.
1971	NASDAQ: The National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations was founded.
1973	SWIFT (The Society for *Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication*) was founded in Brussels by Carl Reuterskiöld.
1981	Michael Bloomberge started Innovation Market Solutions (IMS).
1980-1983	Online banking was first introduced in 1983 in the UK by the Nottingham Building Society.
1983	Mobile phone was introduced in the US (Motorola).
1986	The Single European Act came into effect.
1987	"Black Monday": Stock markets around the globe crashed.
1997	Online personal finance management (PFM) software was introduced as a result of a collaboration between Microsoft, Intuit and CheckFree.
1999	The Dot-com Bubble (Internet Bubble)
2000s	Many FinTech start-ups founded to propose solutions for consumers (e.g. PayPal, eBay).
2008	Global Financial Crisis

1967 -2008

Geography:
Global/
Developed World
Key factors:
- Internet
- Digitalisation
- Traditional financial institutions as key drivers

Figure 4: Highlights of FinTech during the period 1967-2008

(Adapted from Arner et al., 2015, 2016; Xing and Marwala, 2018)

According to Ernst & Young (2014), the development of FinTech is driven by three key factors: digital connectivity, economic downturn, and regulatory changes. During the period 1967-2008 these three major elements came together and have created a financial technology infrastructure which provides a foundation for the next stage of growth.

In terms of digital connectivity, stock trading shifted in the 1970s with electronic stock trading. The 1980s witnessed the introduction of mainframe computers installed in banks and revolutionary digital data and book-keeping systems. In 1990s, the rise of the Internet and online sales and purchasing had a revolutionary impact on the development of FinTech. This resulted in the introduction of online stock brokerage, which replaced phone calls to buy and sell stocks. In addition, throughout this time, various advanced solutions and data analysis tools across trading, treasury and risk management at the corporate level for financial services companies and banks were developed, creating a multi-billion-dollar sector focused on providing support to the financial services industry (Desai, 2015).

During this growth, several severe economic crises occurred, indicating clearly that global financial systems were technologically inter-connected. Some examples are the stock market crash of 1987, or "Black Monday", when stock markets in almost every country around the world plunged, the late 90s Dot-com Bubble burst which triggered a mild economic recession and the 2008 global financial crisis, in which stock markets around the world slumped, large financial institutions collapsed or were bought out, and governments in even the wealthiest parts of the globe had to provide rescue packages to bail out their financial systems.

Regulators have become increasingly focused on the risks of global financial interconnections and their intersection with technologies, with a view that that e-banking created new credit risk and required a new regulatory framework. The Single European Act (SEA) signed in1986, the Big Bang financial liberalisation process of 1986, and the 1992 Maastricht Treaty (formally Treaty on European Union) laid the foundation for the

integration of Europe's financial markets at the beginning of the 21st century (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2015, 2016).

2008 - Current

According to Matt Harris, managing director of Bain Capital Ventures, "the financial crisis was extremely important in ushering in the current wave of FinTech innovation". Many bankers saw the emergence of FinTech not just as a threat but also as an opportunity. By seeking start-ups to partner with, financial institutions sought to get ahead of their competitors and greatly reduce their time to market. Financial institutions have also collaborated with various FinTech startups to develop new solutions based on a wide range of technologies (Gach and Gotsch, 2014).

Currently, retail financial services are being further digitised with the rise of digital and mobile wallets, payment apps, equity crowdfunding platforms, online lending platforms, and robo-advisors. However, new FinTech startups and established technology firms are not simply enhancing banking services, but rather challenging and eventually outpacing established financial services firms. With their agility they can provide a better and quicker service or select a previously underserved niche and they are now supplanting banks when it comes to providing various products and financial services to businesses or the public directly, as well as to banks themselves (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2016; Desai, 2015).

The EY FinTech Adoption Index showed that in 2015, FinTech reached an early adoption with 16 per cent. Two years later, the industry had grown massively with 33 per cent of consumers using two or more FinTech services, and 84 per cent of customers recognising that FinTech is a daily part of their life. These numbers have moved steadily upward to 64 per cent in 2019. FinTech awareness is now high. 96% of consumers can name at least one 'alternative', as in a non-established or traditional bank, that is available for to transfer money and make payments. (EY, 2017c, 2019).

Rapid spread of mobile telephones is seen as a common explanation for the recent FinTech boom (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2016). Smartphones, in particular, are responsible for consumers changing their behaviour. In today's digital age, with significant demographic changes in the population, consumers are seeking speed, convenience, consistency, easy payment, efficiency and friendliness (PwC, 2018).

It should be noted that according to EY FinTech Adoption Index (2019), 87 per cent of digitally active adult consumers in two countries with the largest population in the world, China and India, reported using fintech services regularly. As Bloomberg (2019) commented, with an increasing customer base, a flourishing financial infrastructure, a surge in monetary transactions and the presence of some largest tech firms in the world, Asia is leading the FinTech revolution.
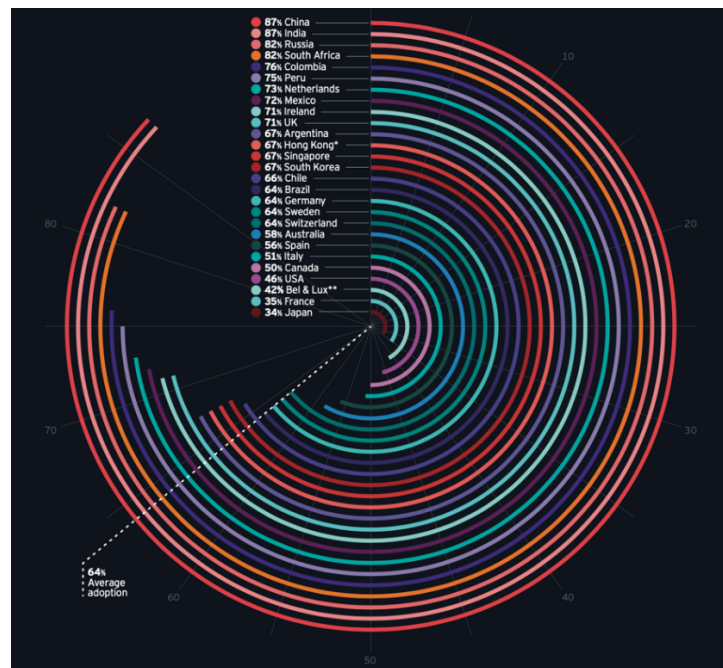
Figure 5: Consumer FinTech adoption across 27 markets

(Source: EY Global FinTech Adoption Index 2019 (2019, p.7))

Accenture commented, "the financial services industry is more focused on technology innovation than at any other point in its history; and it has serious buying power" (Gach and Gotsch, 2014). Deloitte (2017, p.3) further argued, "there has been a gold rush when it comes to fintech formations over the past 10 years". The COVID-19 pandemic may appear to have severely hampered FinTech with investment dropping to $105.3 billion in 2020, from $168 billion in 2019, but a recovery is expected. Several countries across Europe (including the UK) have spent a lot of effort and money to build their FinTech ecosystems and other countries are expected to follow suite (KPMG, 2020).

Total global investment activity (VC, PE and M&A) in fintech 2017–2020*

	2017	2018	2019	2020*
Deal count	2,986	3,712	3,472	2,861
Deal value ($B)	$59.2	$145.9	$168.0	$105.3
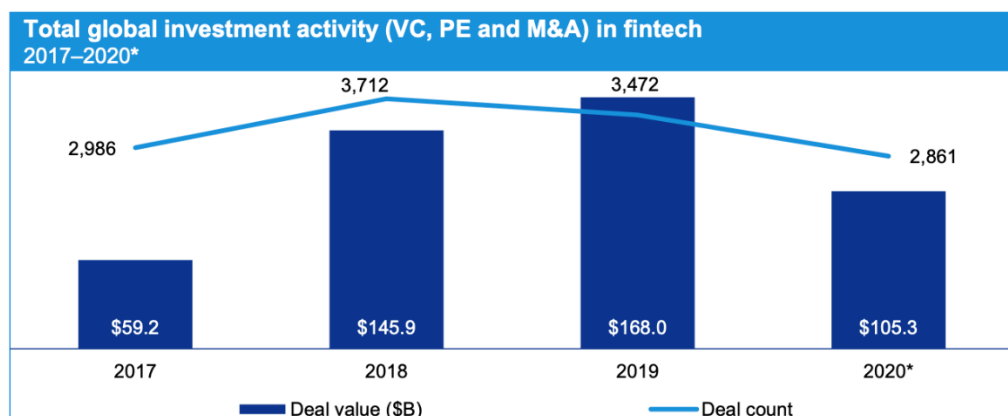
Figure 6: Global Analysis of Investment in Fintech

Source: Pulse of Fintech H2'20, KPMG International

When it comes to FinTech innovation stories during the last decade, it is impossible not to discuss Bitcoin and Blockchain. In 2008, when the pseudonymous Satoshi Nakamoto released the white paper "Bitcoin: A Peer-to-Peer Electronic Cash System", blockchain made its public debut. As a "purely peer-to-peer version of electronic cash" built on blockchain, Bitcoin allows parties to send payments directly to each other without the need for an intermediate financial institution as a trusted third party (Nakamoto, 2008, p.1).

Over the last decade, cryptocurrencies have proven their viability as a new asset class, with exponential growth of over 1,500 crypto assets existing, valued at an aggregate of $550

billion (Forbes Corporate Communications, 2018). Blockchain, the technology that runs Bitcoin, has become one of the biggest breakthrough technologies with potential to usher in an era of autonomous digital commerce (PwC, no date), and register an impact on various industries from financial to manufacturing to educational (Marr, 2018).

Open Banking, a system that leans on Blockchain, came into enforcement in the UK in January 2018. Open Banking permits access to user details from different financial institutions (e.g. banks, insurance companies) over application programming interfaces (APIs). It is an initiative brought about by the European Union who wanted to create unified methods of payment that could be made as easily across borders as within them, and at standard rates. To achieve this, two sets of legislation were required called the Payment Services Directive 1(PSD1) and Payment Services Directive 2 (PSD2).

In another effort to transform Europe's financial industry, a more ambitious and structural version of MiFID (Markets in Financial Instruments Directive) was launched in January 2018 called MiFID II. As a legislative framework instituted by the European Union, MiFID II is designed to improve protection for investors and to make European markets safer, more efficient, and more transparent (Stafford, 2017).

One of the biggest FinTech events in 2019 was the story of Apple Inc, Mastercard and Goldman Sachs releasing their own credit card. The card was an attempt to attract more tech-savvy consumers away from traditional credit cards due to its more advanced security features (Goldman Sachs, 2019). 2019 was also the year Facebook announced their own cryptocurrency called 'Libra' that would be enabled using blockchain technology (Facebook, 2019).

As of 2020, the full economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is still being played out, with positive and negative effects for FinTechs. Digitisation of many services has already been seen across several industry sectors due to a shift in consumer demand away from face-to-face services. Companies have also implemented changes to the way they run their

services, such as PayPal who are waiving fees on chargebacks and have sped up fund

transfers between user's bank accounts, and who, in 2021, enabled their customers to pay

using a number of cryptocurrencies. There is also Revolut (among others) who have

enabled a charitable donation feature in their apps so customers can donate to those

affected by COVID-19. Visa have also followed suit and announced plans for customers to

pay in cryptocurrency (Reuteurs, 2021). Governments, too, have sped up the pace of

regulation for FinTech enabling further innovation (Battersby, 2020; Deloitte, 2020;

Ziegler et al., 2020).

2005 — P2P (Peer to Peer) platform, Zopa, was founded in the UK as the world's first of its kind.

2007 — The first smartphone (iPhone) was released.

2008 - current

2008 — Bitcoin — Blockchain

Geography:
Developed World
Developing
Emerging
Key factors:
- Smartphones
- Start-ups
- New entrants
- 2008 financial crisis
- Last-mover advantage
- Covid-19 pandemic
- Digitalisation during the global lockdown

2009 — Kickstarter introduced a reward-based crowdfunding platform.

2014 — Ethereum was developed by Vitalik Buterin and his team of developers.

2015 — EY launched first global EY FinTech Adoption Index

2017 — Open Banking came into force.

2018 — MiFD II rolled out on January 3, 2018 to strengthen investor protection.

2019 — Apple Inc released its credit card — Facebook announced Libra, a cryptocurrency powered by blockchain technology

2020 — The impacts of COVID-19 play out in the economy

2021 — PayPal launched crypto checkout service. — Visa also announced plans to use a US-dollar-backed cryptocurrency on its payments network.

Figure 7: Highlights of FinTech since 2008

(Adapted from Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2015, 2016; Xing and Marwala, 2018, author's own work, 2021)

Financial work has changed drastically due to FinTech. Regulators are paying attention as well as industry and academic institutions. Consumers are becoming aware of the benefits of FinTech across the globe (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2016).

In 2014, Deutsche Bank claimed that, "for us the digital age has only just begun" (Dapp et al., 2014, p.3), and as technology continues to advance a new global financial ecosystem will emerge. The current is simply the starting point for the FinTech sector (Battersby, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused great uncertainty in the FinTech industry, especially for newer firms who were seeing funding access restricted. Investors preferred more established FinTech firms who were already underway and with clear business models. This was coupled with slowdowns of major economies and the lowering of interest rates. But the pandemic may yet turn out to have created new opportunities for FinTech. For instance, many consumers, now used to social distancing, have switched to online purchasing and financial services. This shift in demand may generate more creativity and opportunities for FinTech to evolve (Deloitte, 2020).

More uncertainty means more requirement for diversification and many traditional banks will need to find new ways to generate revenue as a way to swerve the pandemic's impact to their front-line services. They must start to look at improving their digital services to keep up with this changing demand from their consumers (Battersby, 2020).

An understanding of FinTech history and how FinTech organisations operate along with improving management expertise will certainly benefit the industry.

2.2.3 The London FinTech industry

According to the "UK FinTech: state of the nation" report, London is frequently associated with FinTech startups. It has the highest concentration of financial and professional services firms in the world (Hem, Low and Townson, 2019). The City of London houses a

number of innovative and most recognisable start-ups in FinTech, such as Transferwise, Monzo, and Funding Circle. There are a number of reasons why the London FinTech industry has a strong and distinguished reputation.

Firstly, with most of the big financial institutions headquartered in the capital of UK, London is competitively ahead of Wall Street and Silicon Valley in terms of FinTech innovation. The financial sector of London is uniquely situated alongside a flourishing technology sector – an advantage that Wall Street, Silicon Valley or Route 128, do not have. This feature of the city benefits London FinTech industry in various ways.

Since the mid-1990s, the financial services sector has been one of the most significant customers of IT globally (Arner, Barberis and Buckley, 2015, p.3).

Thanks to its considerable financial services sector, the UK is able to retain a large supply of financial services talent. Over a million people are employed in the UK financial services sector and the country is able to boast of a very competitive lead in financial expertise. In addition to this, the UK employs over one million technology workers (KPMG, 2017). In 2017, it was estimated that over 60,000 people based in the UK worked in its FinTech industry (KPMG, 2017), a figure higher than Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore combined. In 2018, this number increased to around 76,500 people, and is set to grow to 105,500 in 2030 (City of London, 2018). Currently, the UK and London have one of the largest pools of financial and technology talent in the world to support the growth of FinTech.

Secondly, London is also housed within an environment with attractive tax efficient schemes for venture capitalists, such as the Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme (SEIS) and the Enterprise Investment Scheme (EIS). The tax benefits to an investor are significant. An individual can invest up to £100,000 each year under SEIS and £1 million a year under EIS, and enjoy 30 percent and 50 percent income tax relief, respectively on start-up investments.

Thirdly, the UK's government and regulators have been specifically encouraging the growth of its FinTech industry (KPMG, 2017). During recent years, the UK government has been attempting to build relationships with other financial jurisdictions to cut-down on regulatory red-tape and boost FinTech growth after Brexit. (KPMG, 2019).

In short, London has acted as an incubator for FinTech by providing significant investment, using its ample supply of technically skilled talent, providing significant investment, having a practical and forward-looking regulator and being backed-up by successive supportive governments.

However, there is currently strong competition from emerging FinTech hubs, such as China, that are implementing progressive policy initiatives, and specialising in disruptive technologies. The UK needs to firm-up its position on FinTech so that it becomes a desirable destination for FinTech firms and a reputable source for FinTech services. With 82 per cent of global financial services expected to increase fintech partnerships over the next 3-5 years (City of London, 2018), ensuring the UK remains a hub for FinTech in an increasingly competitive global market is essential.

In 2020, as the UK markets moved through uncertainty, due, mainly, to the double impact of Brexit and the global COVID-19 pandemic, investors began to concentrate only on their current portfolios to reduce their overall risk.

Investment in UK-run FinTech still stood at $4.1 billion in 2020, despite the issues mentioned above. The UK has over 10 percent of the global market share in FinTech and its economy benefits from a FinTech contribution of over £11 billion per year. The UK government has recognised the role FinTech will play in the UK's recovery from COVID-19 and set out a plan to ensure the UK stays the leader in global FinTech. It is providing assistance to UK firms so they can scale faster, access better skills and talent and, ultimately, deliver superior financial services (HM Treasury, 2021).

2.2.4 Global virtual teams and its role to the London FinTech industry

EY and HM Treasury's report, "On the cutting edge" (2016), describes four core ecosystem attributes for a successful FinTech industry. These are known as talent, capital, policy and demand. Note that the talent attribute comprises two factors: talent availability (current availability of technical, financial services and entrepreneurial talent) and talent pipeline (availability of future talent, both domestic and foreign). KPMG (2017) shares a similar view and highlights that access to technology and financial services skills, along with entrepreneurship is what a FinTech market relies on.

The UK has a lively FinTech industry and has become known throughout the world as a recognised FinTech centre. Recent reports from EY (2016) and KPMG (2017) confirm the strength of the available UK talent pool for financial services and technology. The UK boasts more FinTech employees than New York, and even more than Australia, Hong Kong and Singapore combined. Despite this, the two giant consulting firms also noted the lack of entrepreneurial talent and significant skills-gaps in some technologies when compared against other leading FinTech locations such as California and Israel. According to a number of key players, UK and London FinTech could be facing talent gaps, particularly in some technologies and entrepreneurship, in the medium to long term.

Disappearing local talent will force the UK to find ways of retaining and attracting foreign talent. At the time of writing there are uncertainties around the UK labour market after Brexit, and the Government must consider how they will address any new talent gaps (KPMG, 2017). The UK needs to improve the depth and pipeline of tech and entrepreneurial talent and seek for greater collaboration and investment. The Guidebook "China and UK FinTech: Unlocking Opportunity", jointly released by EY and the HM Treasury in 2017, shows that the UK is indeed investigating mutually beneficial opportunities with leading FinTech centres all over the world.

According to Kalifa Review of UK FinTech (2021), recruiting and retaining talent from across the globe is something that UK FinTech thrives on, with forty-two per cent of workers in UK FinTech from overseas. In order to remain a global FinTech leader the UK needs to strengthen its position on immigration or risk a significant difficulties in attracting and retaining talent.

The development of global virtual teams plays a vital role in filling the FinTech talent gaps as well as leveraging the benefits of global corporations to ensure that London will retain its position as a world leader in financial technologies. In a globalised world, virtual teams are a critical component for organizations (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000) and are especially critical in multinational FinTech firms. In the last few years, there have been more and more virtual teams emerging in FinTech firms around the world. Technology has enabled access to global talent and made it possible to retain and sustain off-shore teams for the London FinTech industry.

Building global virtual teams not only drives productivity, profitability but also facilitate a greater global reach of the right talents and expertise, anywhere in the world, despite political changes, policy changes and various visa regulations.

In order to effectively take advantage of global virtual teams, it is crucial to gain an understanding of their nature, their benefits and especially the challenges around global virtual teamwork that participants and managers might have to deal with. More research is needed to ensure global virtual teamwork is done right to improve business performance.

2.3 Global virtual teams

2.3.1 The development of virtual teams

1950's technological literature brought about the idea that new developments in electronics and communications could be used with the latest computing technology to allow individuals to be based away from the conventional office (Jones, 1957, 1958, cited in

Baruch, 2001). The idea of virtual teams became increasingly popular during the internet revolution of the 90's (Bergiel et al., 2008), but it was not until the end of the decade that a noticeable move towards virtual teams had really begun (Cissé and Wyrick, 2010). In today's organisations, virtual teams are a typical feature with a vast number of them, around the world, widely adopting virtual team structures to perform work (Hoch and Dulebohn, 2017).

During the past few decades, organisations are increasingly moving towards virtual team structures (Rosen, Furst, and Blackburn, 2006) to bring together diverse knowledge and experience from individuals who are not geographically proximal (Batarseh, Usher, and Daspit, 2017). A report from Roffey Park shows that there are round 1.3 billion virtual workers globally (Lucy et al., 2017). Working in geographically separate teams will soon become the norm. (Mukherjee, Lahiri, Mukherjee, and Billing, 2012), or a work-life balance policy that employees will have the right to request (Duxbury, Higgins, and Neufeld, 1998; Handy and Mokhtarian,1995; Kossek, Barber and Winters, 1999; Nord et al, 2002).

As Sheridan (2012, p.11) argue, "leadership and organisations are viewing "work" as something you do, rather than somewhere you go". Virtual teams are becoming embedded into business and their popularity is increasing. (Hoegl and Muethel, 2016). Today, as more businesses implement the virtual team model, it is much more likely that employees will either become a virtual team member or even be asked to manage one. (Hoegl and Muethel, 2016; Mukherjee, Lahiri, Mukherjee, and Billing, 2012; Smith and Sinclair, 2003). According to Virtual Teams Survey 2018 conducted by RW3 CultureWizard (2018, p.3), with participation on global virtual teams grew from 64 per cent in 2010 to 89 per cent in 2018, virtual teams are "the lifeblood of global organisations".

This rapid growth in the implementation of virtual teams can be attributed to many technological advancements in the previous few decades which have provided the means

for distributed and asynchronous virtual work to become much easier, faster and more efficient (Ford, Piccolo, & Ford, 2017; Hertel et al., 2005; Montoya-Weiss et al., 2001). The current work scenario is marked by the diffusion of advanced information and communication technologies, which have bridged the gap of time and space (Hertel et al., 2005; Montoya et al., 2009) and created a much greater degree of flexibility for when, where and how work is completed (Cascio, 2003), bringing about workplaces that are available 24/7 (Chandra, 2012).

In a globalised world where the best time for meeting all members of an international team may be 8:00pm (Hill et al., 2004), global virtual teams and virtual workers with the ability to "work together apart" through advanced communication technologies (Grenier and Meters, 1992) have begun to emerge as the key factor in the "new economy" (Wiesenfeld et al., 2001, p.214), where all types of economic activity have been trending toward globalisation (Acs and Preston, 1997).

As El-Sofany et al. (2014) argued that due to changes in organisations and the type of work they do, increasing the use of virtual teams has enabled businesses to stay competitive and remain agile in volatile markets (Mukherjee, Lahiri, Mukherjee, and Billing, 2012; Rezgui, 2007).

Global business has grown swiftly since the 1990s and organisations are now more geographically dispersed (Hitt et al., 2016; Knight and Liesch, 2016). The increasing decentralisation and globalisation of work processes has accelerated the need for organisations to implement virtual teams who coordinate their day-to-day activities with various communication technologies that transcend geographical, time zone, cultural, temporal and organisational confines to achieve the common goals and objectives that contribute to their organisation's outputs (Ebrahim, Ahmed and Taha, 2009; Kedia and Mukherjee, 2009; Purvanova and Bono, 2009; Townsend et al., 1998).

Global organisations with concerns in more than one geographical location are having to rely on teams that would not usually (and, in some cases, never) meet in person. (Alsharo, Gregg, and Ramirez, 2016).

In today's knowledge-based networked economy, the expansion of working virtually has been guided by various considerations, such as reducing cost, accessing valuable employee talent and skills, and recognition of the need for teams to be provided with appropriate technology in order for them to innovate (Smith and Sinclair, 2003). Generally speaking, there has been a trend toward more service-oriented businesses and newer, more advanced telecommunications developments have meant more and more knowledge-workers no longer tied to a physical location. (Cascio, 2000; Gressgard, 2011; Malhotra et al., 2007).

In the report "The Future of Work: Jobs and Skills in 2030", it is argued by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (2014) that future working arrangements will be more network-oriented and interconnected. To work within these arrangements, employees and employers will need to develop new capabilities that will allow them to participate in their team virtually and ensure they are more aware of cultural differences. (Störmer et al., 2014).

As far back as 2000, there was a movement among practitioners and researchers predicting that virtual teams would become the norm and a required skill into the new century. In 2009, virtual teams are already a pervasive feature of organisations. (Cissé and Wyrick, 2010).

2.3.2 Definition of virtual teams

Utilisation of work teams has been commonplace in virtually every type of organisation world-wide (Jackson and Madsen, 2005; Townsend et al., 1998). Most scholars in management acknowledge that teams are the main unit of performance in an organisation (Samson and Daft, 2003). In the previous decades, with advances in information and

communication technology, more emphasis has been placed on geographically distributed virtual teams but, despite their growing in popularity not very much is known about them (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Stanton and Steinbrenner, 2002). A majority of existing research in virtual teams lacks scope (Martins, Gilson and Maynard, 2004), as it is based on small teams of students, not those actually working in corporate virtual teams (Webster and Wong, 2008; Zhang et al., 2009). Thus far, the definitions in the current literature regarding virtual teams lack depth (Cohen and Gibson 2003; Chudoba et al., 2005; Kirkman et al. 2002; Saunders 2000).

What is a virtual team and what are the differences between virtual teams and conventional teams? Martin et al. (2004, p.808) discuss the fact that virtual teams "are teams first, with virtualness being treated as a team characteristic". Therefore, before a discussion about virtual teams, it is important to set forth the exact meaning of the word, "team". Katzenbach and Smith (1993) argue that understanding exactly what a team is must be a requirement if managers wish to improve their decision making around teams.

Cohen and Bailey (1997) define a team as a collection of individuals mutually sharing the responsibility of the results of their work. According to Ricketts and Ricketts (2010), a team is made up of individuals who have been brought together to achieve a common goal, through the completion of designated individual tasks while offering each other cross-functional support. Teams also can be described as a group of people, set up in a specific context, who work together on common tasks (Hoegl and Gemuenden, 2001; Janz, Colquitt and Noe, 1997).

The most vital differences between virtual teams and conventional teams are that they cross boundaries of space and thus, heavily rely on electronic communication, whereas members of co-located teams work collaboratively in one location or occupy the same physical space and often co-ordinate tasks with face-to-face meetings (Krum et al., 2016; Zakaria et al., 2004). Virtual team members are geographically separated by a great many

number of miles or even by continents (Pape, 1997, Townsend et al., 1996). Bell and Kozlowski (2002, p.13-14) commented, "it is the absence of this proximal, face-to-face interaction between members of virtual teams that makes them "virtual" and distinguishes them from more traditional teams". The authors discuss that, although it is true many co-located teams also communicate using computerised telecommunications technology, this technology is mainly used to complement face-to-face communication.

Gibson and Cohen (2003) further explain, when a team is co-located, they can be more discrete about when to use technology, whereas virtual teams usually have no choice. Although they may occasionally meet in person, they must rely on electronically mediated communication such as emails, telephones and videoconferences to keep in touch, coordinate their activities and carry out their work. The authors emphasize that using technology does not mean the team is virtual because all teams nowadays use technology such as telephones, emails and computers. A team's virtuality is increased by how much they are reliant on technology, particularly telecommunications technology. Gross (2002) supports that, a virtual team is one that carries out its work almost exclusively through technology.

While there are a few early definitions they do not discuss a team's temporary nature or how reliant they are on technology (e.g. Henry and Hartzler, 1998) and more likely to see virtual organisation from process perspective (e.g. Hale and Whitlaw, 1997; Katzy, 1998; Mowshowitz, 1997; Venkatraman and Henderson, 1998), literature on virtual teams shows that there is general agreement that attributes such as "team", "geographically dispersed" and the usage of "technology" constitute the foundation for the majority of definitions of virtual teams across different journal articles:

- "Virtual teams consist of team members who are geographically dispersed and who come together by way of telecommunications technology (e.g., video conferencing). Each team member may be located in a traditional office setting, but the offices are

not proximate to one another." (Kurland and Bailey, 1999, p.56)

- "Groups of geographically and/or organisationally dispersed co-workers that are assembled using a combination of telecommunications and information technologies to accomplish an organisational task." (Townsend et al., 1998, p. 17)

- "Teams whose members use technology to varying degrees in working across locational, temporal, and relational boundaries to accomplish an interdependent task." (Martins et al., 2004, p.808)

- "Teams that predominantly use digital media to communicate and coordinate their work with at least one of the team members working at a different location and/ or in a different time zone" (Krum et al., 2016, p.2)

- Groups of people working "interdependently with a shared purpose across space, time and organisation boundaries using technology" (Lipnack and Stamps, 2000, p.18)

As work becomes increasingly complex, dynamic, and global, virtual teams are becoming a common and important constituent of today's organizational structures (Hoch and Dulebohn, 2017; Zimmermann, 2011). Martins, along with his colleagues (2004) pointed out a move from defining virtual teams in a simple comparison with a 'traditional', co-located team and, instead, emphasising "virtualness" as a characteristic of teams. (e.g. Griffith and Neale, 2001; Griffith, Sawyer and Neale, 2003; Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010).

It is worth noting that global virtual teams should not be treated the same as intra-national teams as, although they may be geographically separated, they do not usually differ in culture or language (El-Sofany, Alwadani, and Alwadani, 2014). The virtual teams featured in this study are all *global* virtual teams, with team members distributed throughout the world.

2.3.3 Characteristics of virtual teams

Among previous research, it is widely understood and agreed that there are marked differences between co-located and virtual teams. In traditional co-located teams, members typically work in close physical proximity to each other, and the task coordination is straightforward and fulfilled by the team members together (Ebrahim et al., 2009). In contrast, a virtual team is geographically distributed and can even cross time-zones and organisational boundaries (Bergiel et al., 2008), and their members rely on various technologies to co-ordinate their work, instead of face-to-face meetings as in traditional teams (Maduka et al., 2018). Ebrahim, Ahmed and Taha (2009) in their literature review claim that traditional, co-located teams and virtual teams are usually compared against each other as if they were opposites. They listed some common distinctions such as fully traditional teams being co-located, communicate face-to-face and coordinate team tasks together, whereas fully virtual teams, located in different locations, communicate through technological means and tasks are highly structured so coordination amongst team members is usually unnecessary.

Saunders and Ahuja (2006) argue that previous studies typically tend to treat all virtual teams alike and describe virtual teams as geographically distributed and temporary. For example, Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) perceive global virtual teams as temporary, geographically scattered, culturally diverse, electronically communicating work groups. Firstly, global virtual teams are characterised as temporary because its team members have probably never worked with each other before and may not do so again as a team. Secondly, the characterisation of virtual teams as global suggests that each culturally diverse team member can operate in perfect synchronicity with the team's global diversity. Lastly, the team's dependence on telecommunications technology permits geographically dispersed team members to work together. While the definition of Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) has covered many important features of global virtual teams, it should be noted that

not all geographically dispersed teams are temporary as they have asserted, particularly in the contemporary business world.

Similarly, Ebrahim et al. (2009, p.2655) come to a conclusion during their literature review that "small team size" and that "not a permanent team" are key common characteristic of virtual teams. Zhang and Fjermestad (2006) suggest the common theme for virtual teams is that in a virtual team, the team members are distant from each other temporally, geographically, organisationally, and culturally, and they are linked through computer-mediated communication technologies. This description provides a good summary of the characteristics of virtual teams commonly mentioned in existing literature, but as the world of work changes, some aspects of this description will need reviewing.

As noted by Saunders and Ahuja (2006), when theories are built in this area, they have centred on temporary teams with a majority of studies using student teams working together for two to fifteen weeks, and their findings are tacitly expected to be relevant for a longer-term, much more dispersed team. To begin with, global virtual teams were built for ephemeral projects. Nowadays, the rise and spread of advances in information and communication technology and constant search for economic advantage have led global organisations to increasingly rely on virtual collaboration. A number of virtual teams are now viewed as ongoing and not temporary. Hansen, Hope and Moehler (2012) theorises that during the upcoming years, organisations will have a greater dependency on building permanent global virtual teams. Berliner (2020) argue that as working conditions continue to evolve, virtual work is set to become permanent for many professionals. In fact, during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, employees transitioned from face-to-face to virtual work settings. It was later announced by many companies that they had decided this change would be made permanent, leaving large numbers of employees facing the challenges of working virtually (Meluso, Johnson and Bagrow, 2020).

In summary, the perception of virtual teams as temporary work groups or a completely opposite form of working compared to traditional, co-located teams might not necessarily reflect the reality of current business world. Global virtual teams today refer to internationally dispersed groups of people from diverse cultures and countries, usually distributed all over the world and who seldom meet in person (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1998; Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). They mainly use technology, especially communication technology, to communicate and coordinate their work (Hovde, 2014).

2.3.4 Advantages and challenges of global virtual teams

Despite the vital role of virtual teams in shaping future organisations, thus far we know very little about them. It is therefore challenging to indicate what implications virtual teams may have for essential organisational processes (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002). Virtual teams are seen as the key success factor for the 21st century (Grenier and Metes, 1995), and at the same time one of the main challenges managers now have to deal with is the management of virtual work. (Wiesenfeld et al., 2001). This section will briefly discuss the benefits and challenges of global virtual teams.

Advantages

Sheridan (2012) suggests that one best practice to attract top talent is to tout the fact that an organisation has a virtual work policy directly in the offer letter, as this will encourage skilled professionals to join an organisation's team over another company. Virtual work policies offer employees multiple benefits, such as higher work flexibility, more autonomy, greater work-life balance, and a reduction in travel time induced stress and expense (Orlikowski, 2002). Sheridan (2012) further emphasizes that the access to greater work-life balance that virtual work can offer is a huge draw, attracting top talent dedicated

to balancing work and life, especially younger generations who are replacing the "living the work" with a "working to live" attitude.

In addition to attracting the best employees for the job, virtual work policies enable companies to access a wider hiring pool, bringing together best expertise from different parts of the world, combined with deep, local knowledge of the most promising markets (Furst et al., 2004; D'Souza and Colarell, 2010; Berry, 2011a; Singh, 2013; Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton, 2017). Attracting top talent from various locales not only contribute to greater diversity in the workplace, but also provide magnetic attractors to the organisations, and establish a culture that in itself attracts more skilled individuals (Sheridan, 2012).

A virtual team is typically thought of as a global team, and this comes with the implication that the team is culturally diverse and that its members are capable of thinking and acting along with the diversity of their world-wide environment (Déantics and Poole, 1997). Virtual teams enjoy a diverse, cross-cultural make-up that ultimately benefits them and their organisation. (Kurland and Bailey, 1999, p. 64). With a diverse cultural background, virtual teams are able to operate within the diversity of their world-wide environment. (Jackson, Aiken, Vanjani and Hasan, 1995). The capability of multinational companies to effectively use globally dispersed knowledge and skill resources appears to be one of the most critical points (Billing et al., 2010; Kedia and Mukherjee, 2009). Members of global virtual teams represent different cultures, and speak different languages (Dube and Pare, 2001). They operate together within an organisation and carry out global work that has international implications.

While the tasks given to global virtual teams are strategically vital and remarkably complex (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000), it's possible to form virtual teams quickly as they are not encumbered by limitations of time or geography and are agile by their nature. They offer organisations the advantages of reducing redundancies, lowering cost and

discontinuities associated with global collaboration (Kayworth and Leidner, 2000; Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010; Schulze and Krumm, 2017). They enhance organizational speed, flexibility, agility, and this makes them able to respond quickly to changes in a modern, competitive world because they can utilise team members around the clock who can be dispersed throughout many different time zones. (Algesheimer, Dholakia and Gurau, 2011; Gressgard, 2011; Chamakiotis, Dekoninck, and Panteli, 2013). All this helps multinational companies compete in the current business environment.

Challenges

Bell and Kozlowski (2002) argue that while a great deal of focus has been given to virtual teams in current literature, most of the discussion has been mainly on the benefits of virtual teams. Not much attention has been given to understand their challenges or problems.

Organisations can benefit from virtual teams greatly, but, conversely, as global virtual team members are both geographically distributed and functionally diverse, a high degree of virtuality adds complexity to team dynamics (Furst et al., 2004; Kirkman et al., 2004; Wheatley and Wilemon, 1999), and the barriers can be larger due to differences in national, cultural and linguistic attributes (Zakaria et al., 2004).

In 1997, Gould presents several drawbacks for virtual teams: difficulty in recognising individuals' contributions and group celebration of milestone achievements, difficulty in providing visibility of projects, lack of trust, and the constraints of technology. Cascio (2000) notes five principal disadvantages of virtual teams: lack of physical interaction, loss of face-to-face synergies, lack of trust, greater concern with predictability and reliability, and lack of social interaction. Nowadays, the challenge of making a virtual team operate effectively has become even more complex. The workplace is now a diverse mix of ethnicities, cultures and generations. The current work scenario is witnessing five generations coexist in the workplace, each with unique set of priorities and expectation,

struggling for balance. This creates further challenges for virtual teams because they have to work with new cultures, expanded time zones and geographies, with language differences and generations with limited or totally absence of face-to-face communication. It is argued that both co-located teams and virtual teams are often confronted with challenges, but virtual teams confront more challenges (Chatfield et al., 2014; Dube and Pare, 2001) and those challenges can be unique when compared to a co-located team (Dulebohn and Hoch, 2017).

From 2010 to 2020, RW3 CultureWizard continuously carried out biennial global virtual survey. The survey in 2014 estimates that 77 per cent of those teams would be considered multi-cultural. The survey in 2018 reports that approximately 62 per cent of respondents work on teams with three or more cultures. However, only 22 per cent of participants receive formal training in global virtual communication skills. Virtual teams are believed to face unique challenges due to lack of face-to-face contact which can intensify the impact of team members' cultural differences. Recently, The Trends in Global Virtual Work—2020 Report confirms that virtual work will continue to grow. Most of the key challenges remain the same as mentioned in the previous report with three main areas of challenges, namely as the collaboration challenge, the leadership challenge and the challenge of trust. It is noted that issues in building relationships, managing conflict, understanding accent and lack of responsiveness stay as top challenges in virtual environments over years.

Top issues 2014		Top issue 2018		Top issue 2020	
3000 managers		1,620 respondents		2,700 respondents	
Over 100 countries		90 countries		106 countries	
Challenges around trust	64%	Challenges with time zones	88%	Building relationships	37%
Decision-making	55%	Difficulty in communication	86%	Managing conflict	33%
Managing conflict	54%	Managing conflict	86%	Understanding diverse accent	25%
Expressing opinions	53%	Building relationships	86%	Lack of responsiveness	20%
		Timeliness and responsiveness	80%		
		Understanding different accents	80%		
		Lack of participant from all colleagues	76%		

Table 1: Challenges virtual teams face

Adapted from Global Virtual Surveys by RW3 CultureWizard (2014, 2018, 2020)

It is widely agreed that with a virtual team, the main challenges are regarding trust and communication and leadership (Dube and Marnewick, 2016; Fernandez and Jawadi, 2015; Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Jarvenpaa, Shaw and Staples, 2004). Adding to that, virtual teams also present greater complexity due to the differences in laws, regulations and business processes (Maduka et al., 2018). Companies also have to spend a significant amount of time and relocation costs for specific projects to avoid the drawbacks to teamwork that usually occur with distance (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). Daim et al. (2012, p.199) posit that a breakdown in communication can "wreak havoc on a project as team members struggle to effectively communicate and work with one another".

Furthermore, Hansen, Hope and Moehler (2012) express concerns that very few studies have examined the newer challenge of building permanent virtual teams so organisations can improve co-operation and knowledge-sharing across different geographies.

To sum up, the Figure 9 below summarises key characteristics, business drivers and key challenges of virtual teams.

Key business drivers

- Access to global talent pool
- Best expertise with deep, local knowledge of the most promising markets
- Lowering cost and discontinuities
- Enhance organizational speed, flexibility, agility
- 24/7 services

Virtual team

- A team, with added virtualness
- Geographically dispersed
- Diverse cultures and countries
-Lack of face-to-face contact
- Use technology to communicate and coordinate works

Key challenges

- Communication
- Technology breakdown
- Leadership challenge
- The challenge of trust
- Building relationships
- Differences in laws, regulations and business processes
- Differences in culture and linguistic attributes

Figure 9: Virtual teams: key characteristics, business drivers and challenges

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

2.3.5 Trust in global virtual teams

Trust: a critical factor to virtual team's success

Trust is an essential factor when developing a team and building and maintaining the team members' relationships (Singh et al., 2015). Many researchers find that trust is the main foundation of successful team as well as the successful implementation projects (e.g.). However, there is no common conceptual understanding on the actual definition of trust even though many researchers state its importance in team-building (Hosmer, 1995; Robbins, 2016). As Malhotra and Murnighan (2002) note, the variation in definitions of trust across both disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology, economics) and analysis levels (e.g. interpersonal, societal, institutional).

Fukuyama perceived trust as "the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community" (1995, p. 26). Mayer et al. (1995, p.712) defined trust as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectations that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party".

Ambrose and Johnson (1998) commented that this definition of Mayer et al. differentiates trust from other concepts like cooperation, confidence and predictability. It's possible for two parties to co-operate successfully even if they don't trust each other and confidence can reduce risk in the relationship. Predictability can reduce the uncertainty that builds in such relationships. The scholars further suggest that this definition can also be effectively applied in digital environments relies on non-face-to-face interaction, which increases the vulnerability of stakeholders. With an emphasis on vulnerability, there are two principle strands in the concept of trust: a behavioural decision to accept risk-taking (choice) and a willingness to take risk, and to accept vulnerability (attitudinal). These factors are relevant for the present study which is about dealing with people working in a virtual environment.

Buhlmann (2006) argued that the definition of Mayer et al. (1995) only embraces the relationship of one party with another party while in conventional as well as global virtual teams, a team usually comprises more than two people, forming a one-to-many relationship. It is suggested that the element "collective trust" should also be taken into account when using the definition of Mayer et al., as Gibson and Cohen (2003) emphasize, "collective trust is a crucial element of virtual team functioning", and can be defined as "a shared psychological state in a team that is characterized by an acceptance of vulnerability based on expectations of intentions or behaviours of others within the team" (p.59).

The success of teams depends on trust. Trust between the team members themselves and trust between the team members and their team lead. (Boies et al., 2015). Tyrant et al.

(2003) grouped trust into three types: role performance trust, altruistic trust, and affective bond trust:

(1). Role performance trust, relates to proving competencies with the required behaviours and tasks to complete the team's goals;

(2). Altruistic trust: when a leader demonstrates this type of trust, team members are inspired to trust that this leader will always act honourably and for the overall good of the team in most situations, even if the leader is required to provide some sort of self-sacrifice;

(3). Affective bond trust, which deals with how well a person can build friendships with others in the team and develop long-term relationships.

According to Zhu, Newman, Miao, and Hooke (2013), trust can be either cognitive or affective. Cognitive qualities refer to professionalism, competence, and reliability while affective qualities involve commitment, caring, and emotional. Their study reveals how important affective trust is and how it can translate transformational leadership into good work by team members, including their commitment and citizenship behaviours, and contribute to their overall job performance.

According to Vanhala and Ritala (2016), the existing literature has indicated various types of trust within organisations, and the distinction is often made on the type of trustee. That is there are certain types of people or organisations that people will generally trust. It is suggested that trust can be classified as impersonal and interpersonal. The definition of Impersonal trust is: "the individual employee's expectations about the employer organisation's capability and fairness" (Vanhala, Puumalainen and Blomqvist, 2011, p.492), whereas Interpersonal trust is usually defined as positive expectations of an employee that they can be relied on to complete their work competently by their team members and their team leaders. Interpersonal trust grows out of individual interactions within a team whereas impersonal trust grows from team roles, processes and their reputation. (Vanhala, Heilmann, and Salminen, 2016).

In a multi-method case study, which detailed an investigation of impersonal and interpersonal trust impact on virtual team communication, Lohikoski, Kujala, Haapasalo, Aaltonen, and Ala-Mursula (2016) analysed data provided by 94 employees in a globe-spanning telecommunications organisation which has a considerable history of using virtual working methods. The authors found that impersonal trust was considered more important in virtual organisations than other, co-located organisations. They surmised that impersonal trust enables interpersonal trust and can impact team communication at a more fundamental level. Furthermore, the results of their study suggest that interpersonal affective trust can affect team member communication. The authors admit that some of the findings of their research contradict findings from their previous studies, and mention that the discipline of trust and communication with regards to virtual teams is still very young.

Trust can be critical in all types of teams, but it is especially critical as an enabler in virtual teams because the team lead can have very little face-to-face contact with their team members (Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Jarvenpaa, Knoll, and Leidner, 1998; Pinjani and Palvia, 2013; Sarker et al., 2011). Virtual relationships can be delicate, and they require a very high level of trust when compared to more conventional teams. (Panteli, 2005). Trust is crucial to lower the high levels of uncertainty conditions within the global and technically-based environment (Jarvenpaa et al., 1998). Trust is central to the efficient working of virtual teams (Jarvenpaa, Shaw and Staples, 2004; Zigurs, 2003).

Lipnack and Stamps (1997, p.225) point out that trust is a "need to have" characteristic in modern virtual teams and an important quality in building meaningful relationships. Handy (1995), quoted in Gazor (2012, p.138), talks about this quite explicitly:

> "If we are to enjoy the efficiencies and other benefits of the virtual organisation, we will have to rediscover how to run organisations based more on trust than on control. Virtuality requires trust to make it work. Technology on its own is not enough."

The issue of trust-building in virtual teams was the centre of a longitudinal quasi-experimental study conducted by Crisp and Jarvenpaa in 2013. The authors found that swift trust is typically associated with global virtual teams. According to them, swift trust is fragile and requires reinforcement and calibration by actions of the leader and team members.

The concept of swift trust was first explored by Meyerson and colleagues in 1996. It is described as a unique form of trust in temporary systems. As Long et al. (2010) explains, it is a kind of trust that forms quickly and grows from co-operation on shared work instead of similar cultural aspects or proximity to teammates. In swift trust theory, trust is assumed from the start and then, as work goes on, is adjusted accordingly.

Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) conducted a study into trust and virtual teams. Their eight-week research project of seventy-five teams of university students, pointed out major behavioural differences and strategic differences between teams with high-trust and teams with low-trust. The study also supported the existence of swift trust. Panteli (2005) argue that while the research by Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) provides significant insights in this area of study, applying these insights in a business context reveals there are some limitations. Swift trust makes the assumption that roles are defined clearly and understood by everyone in the team, but requests to complete tasks and project requirements are not always articulated clearly. Furthermore, clients may request any number of changes to a project already underway. Trust-building is not always a swift process in a complex business environment with all the political conflictual conflicts and power-grabs involved. Buhlmann (2006) highlighted that from a team development point of view, it is more important to understand if and how trust can be built gradually in virtual teams.

Zaccaro and Bader (2003), quoted in Maduka, Edwards, Greenwood, Osborne and Babatunde (2018), suggest that there are two trust development stages :

(1). Calculus trust, which arises when forming a new team and guides, highlights, and boosts the criticality of team members being able to work together and to responsibly and consistently trust each other throughout various difficult situations;

(2). Knowledge trust, which develops when a team gets to know each other and becomes able to understand and predict its members actions and behaviours.

Kirkman et al. (2002) studied 65 virtual teams and found that trust can be categorised into two types: interpersonal trust and task-based trust. Co-located teams usually rely on interpersonal trust (or benevolent trust), or a trust built up as personal relationships develop. If people regularly meet with each other, spend time together, interact with each other they get to know their teammates and form trust. Conversely virtual teams develop trust by focusing on tasks. The authors call this 'ability-based' or 'task-based' trust. "Unlike face-to-face teams, where trust develops based on social bonds formed by informal chats around the water cooler, impromptu meetings, or afterwork gatherings, virtual team members establish trust based on predictable performance" (p. 71). Task-based trust is critical for virtual teams which is, essentially, a belief that other team members can be relied on to finish their tasks. Trust based on a task-based relationship is only gained when virtual team members without prior face-to-face interactions deliver high quality work to achieve the common goals, follow through team commitments and deadlines, reliably, consistently and responsively.

Signs of High-Trust and Low-Trust Global Virtual Team

Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) categorise virtual teams into low-trust and high-trust, using a pattern-matching approach "to infer behaviours and strategies common to the high-trust teams, but less common to, or non-existent in, the low-trust team" (p.52).

According to the authors, a low-trust team is reactive and concerned more with the process than the result. They tend to be pessimistic in nature and do not interact frequently. Their

leadership tends to be static, and feedback is unpredictable and infrequent. By contrast, a high trust team is proactive and focuses on the results of a task. They are more optimistic, follow dynamic leadership and interact frequently. They receive and give regular and frequent feedback. Their findings are presented in the table 2:

Strategies/ Behaviours	High-Trust Teams	Low-Trust Teams
Style of action	- Proactive	- Reactive
Focus of dialog	- Task output driven	- Procedural
Team spirit	- Optimistic	- Pessimistic
Leadership	- Dynamic	- Static
Task goal clarity	- Team's responsibility	- Individual responsibility
Role division and specificity	- Emergent and interdependent	- Assigned, independent
Time management	- Explicit/process-based	- Nonexistence
Pattern of interaction	- Frequent, few gaps	- Infrequent, gaps
Nature of feedback	- Predictable, substantive	- Unpredictable, non-substantive

Table 2: High-and Low-Trust Teams
(Source: Jarvenpaa et al., 1998)

Tucker and Panteli (2003) carried out research within a global IT organisation. A total of twelve interviews were conducted and eighteen global virtual team scenarios were explored. Their findings regarding high-trust and low-trust team differences are summarised in the table below:

High Trust Global Virtual Teams	Low Trust Global Virtual Teams
Factors related to Shared Goals	
- Awareness of shared goals - Take time to build share goals - Open debate for shared goals up front - Team-based goals have primacy	- Lack of awareness of shared goals - Lack of shared goals - Opinions of others not considered - Individual goals take primacy
Factors related to power	
- Availability of facilitators - Facilitators focus on win-win - Recognition of knowledge as power - Recognition that power moves; power in many places - Power differentials are minimised	- Power battles - Coercion - Misunderstandings and conflict of interests - Use of positional power - Perception of "I have power"
Communication	
- Face-to-face where possible - Regular synchronous CMC (computer-mediated communication) - Social interaction	- Asynchronous CMC - Time difference matters - Little or no social interest

Table 3: Differences between High-Trust and Low-Trust Global Virtual Teams
(Source: Tucker and Panteli, 2003)

Cultural issues in building trust

The building of trust, especially at a global level, is challenged by the differences in culture and communication difficulties in virtual teams (Mancini, 2010). Previous research has highlighted problems and conflicts for global virtual team members that are working within different cultures (e.g. Oertig and Buergi, 2006). Gibson and Manual examine trust in multicultural virtual teams and find that, the greater the cultural gap between team members, the less trust in the team. They state that higher levels of risk and interdependence in virtual teams, which reduces trust, can be due to multiculturalism. (Gibson and Cohen, 2003).

Researchers have generally agreed that the cultural issue plays a significant role in building trust among global virtual teams (Mancini, 2010; Zakaria et al., 2014). As virtual team members may come from different parts of the globe and, therefore, a different cultural setting (Hosseini et al., 2013), with varied group behaviours and communications styles (Gudykunst, 1997), to build trust among members in global virtual teams, the cultural factor should be taken into account.

Hofstede (2001, p.9) defines culture simply as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". According to a Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE) Study, culture is understood as "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations" (House and Javidan, 2004, p.15).

The culture dimension is important because it is a powerful, though largely subconscious, group of forces which can influence individual and team behaviour, perception, ways of thinking and values. Acknowledging and appreciating the disparate range of cultural values, attitudes and nuances across the world is a critical challenge in a global virtual team (House et al, 2004).

Global virtual teams often comprise of people from various geographies and cultures, as such assumptions, beliefs, values and orientations may radically differ among members. Different ways of interpreting perceptions and expectation may lead to confusion, frustration and disincentive, and can therefore affect individual performance as well as the overall team performance, and as a result, is linked to trust issues.

It is widely agreed that cultural differences should be taken into account when managing virtual teams (Pauleen and Rajasingham, 2004) as they can diminish trust (Gibson and Manuel, 2003). Cultural adaption is seen as a key factor that drives the success and failure

in virtual teams (Chang et al., 2014). Managers must have the flexibility to respond quickly and positively when confronted with practices that could be very different from their own. (House et al, 2004).

2.3.6 Communication in global virtual teams

Communication is defined as a two-way exchange of information (Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra, 2014). Technology and its effects on virtual team communication has been the subject of numerous studies.

The relationship between communication and trust

Communication is critical for teams to build and maintain trust. Trust itself is also critical for communication. (Lohikoski et al., 2016). In 2018, a survey of 218 global project workers and 18 in-person interviews with global project managers, Henderson et al. (2016) showed that and effective and functioning team requires trust and communication. There is a strong connection between trust and communication in global virtual teams. On one hand, the efficient use of communication has an equally important place when gaining and maintaining trust (Anderson, McEwan, Bal and Carletta, 2007). Relationships of trust must be built on a foundation of consistent and reliable communication (Sheridan, 2012). Communication is the backbone and skeleton of every team. Lack of transparency encourages gossip and creates mistrust (Bloch and Whiteley, 2009). On the other hand, despite previous claims that complex information cannot be transmitted by virtual teams, recent studies indicate that this is possible if there exists a high level of trust between team members (Lohikoski et al., 2016). Zeffane, Tipu and Ryan (2011) examined the triad of relationships between communication, trust and commitment and found that "trust and commitment do not just happen; they are forged and maintained through effective communication" (p.82).

Trust, communication, and leadership are the foundation of modern businesses. Communication allows leaders to develop trust within their team and, once trust has been achieved, goals can be established and won with the full support of their team members.

The use of computer-mediated communication in virtual teams

It is argued that without face-to-face contact, members of the virtual teams are almost dependant on communication technology to co-ordinate their tasks (Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000). According to Berry (2011b), compared to face-to-face communication, technological communication methods allow for less social and political contextual cues and non-verbal cues such as gestures, real time facial expressions, tones of voice. This might constrain understanding and means subtle emotional messages can be misread which causes needless conflicts (Chawla and Krauss, 1994; Workman et al., 2003). As Brown, Huettner, and James-Tanny (2010) explain, approximate seventy per cent of the information transmitted during a face-to-face conversation is non-verbal. This is information missing in most discussions between virtual teams. Furthermore, "add to that the increased noise-to-signal ratio inherent in virtual communication, and it is easy to see how minor misunderstandings can escalate into full-blown wars" (p.21).

Lack of face-to-face communication also increases the time needed to form decisions among virtual teams (Baltes et al., 2002). Literature shows that teams relying on communication through technology will experience problems when they're attempting to collect feedback or suggestions about the team's goals and activities. Team members also less likely to share sensitive information and engage in off-task and social communication, which may have an impact on team effectiveness (Bordia, 1997; DeSanctis and Monge, 1999; Staples and Webster, 2007; Workman et al., 2003).

It should be highlighted that, however, there are inconsistencies in literature regarding the use of computer-mediated communication and team effectiveness. Powell, Piccoli, and

Ives, (2004) point out in their own literature review that a number of studies actually found no differences between effectiveness of face-to-face and virtual teams. Whereas there is evidence that using technology to communicate is actually helpful for teams working on tasks to generate ideas, perhaps due to pressure seeming lower than in face-to-face meetings (Bordia, 1997). In fact, teams using technology to communicate will see better results than face-to-face teams when working on tasks that require diverse thinking. (DeSanctis and Monge, 1999).

As Powell, Piccoli, and Ives (2004) argue, these inconsistencies occur mainly due to many of published articles (approximately 90 per cent) in virtual teams using student groups as participants, and team size have been relatively small with an average of four individuals, usually less than eight members. The authors point out that while controlled experiments that use students are often reduced to their organisational settings, findings show a disconnect between field-based and controlled setting studies.

Johnson, Bettenhausen and Gibbons (2009) agree with Power et al. (2004) that the effects of computer-mediated communication found in controlled-setting student groups may not generalise to organisational work group. The authors also add other reasons for these inconsistencies. In particular, a number of the studies conducted (e.g. Burke and Chidambaram, 1996; Galegher and Kraut, 1994) have forced the use of communications technology into just a few categories which do not represent the full range of communication possible using today's technology. In addition, while a number of studies may use temporary teams, the use of different communications technology types may have different impacts on long-term groups and short-term groups.

Furthermore, during the last few decades, computer-mediated communication technologies has profoundly revolutionised the manner in which organisational members collect and distribute data, interact with other people, and had impacted relationship dynamics between team members (Baltes et al., 2002; Flanagin and Waldeck, 2004).

Nonetheless, in a recent literature review, Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020) identify 255 relevant studies, primarily focusing on technology use and make a conclusion that there has not been much effort to investigate the challenges virtual teams face and their use of technology to address issues. The author asserts that understanding this is essential to the development and use of technology that can provide better support to virtual teams. In actual fact, most of tools and technologies described in many available studies are outdated. Most common tools mentioned across literature are emails, chat, shared drives and telephonic conferences, videoconferences which were traditional ways of communication that virtual teams have been deployed for over twenty years (Charlier, Stewart, Greco and Reeves, 2016; Mukherjeem and Natrajan, 2017). A few tools mentioned by Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020) are Zoom, Skype, Slack, Microsoft Teams, however they are only listed as names without further details or discussion. This leaves a massive yet under-explored field of research, to which this study attempts to contribute. The present research investigates global virtual teams in the FinTech context. As a tech pioneering industry with excellent resources for investment and the common use of virtual teams, FinTech presents itself as one of the best areas to examine the challenges virtual teams face as well as the technologies they use to mitigate them.

Over-communication

In contrast to the expectation of poor communication between geographically dispersed employees, as exhibited by the literature, a qualitative study by Lee-Kelley and Sankey (2007) shows that the sheer volume of conference calls and emails in projects run by virtual teams is enormous and near unmanageable. Despite businesses confidence that conference calls are an essential replacement for interpersonal interaction, there are complaints that conference calls are too frequent and too long (some are reported as lasting between four to eight hours). Further, due to endless email ping-ponging forwards and backwards, along with previous messages attached, it is almost impossible to fully read

every email, and many were not read at all. The recipient list is not always carefully considered and, often, people who should be CC'd are missed or forgotten, while people who were not essential to the mail often included.

As the authors note, observation shows that people's accents often posed more challenges than their use of language and this was put forward as a partial explanation for people's preferred use of emails.

Multi-tasking during virtual meetings

Multi-tasking has been becoming increasingly common in work environments (Tang, 2005). There is evidence that information workers often experience interruptions during the execution of their activities. González and Mark (2005) conducted a study of thirty-six information workers in two enterprises and they discovered that people constantly switch their focus during the working day, usually after spending about ten minutes on activities connected to the same work theme, they will switch to another theme.

Gibson and Cohen (2003) point out that it is quite common that during meetings people mute their phone when not speaking and carry-on side conversations, read and respond to e-mails without other participant's acknowledge that they are multi-tasking. The authors find this phenomenon happens in both virtual and physical meetings (when participants bring along their laptops). The authors point out that while some multi-tasking is a way to deal with discussions that are unnecessary or pointless, it also can distract participants and leads to additional redundant discussions due to missed part of discussions. In addition, team members can miss opportunities to provide important input to the discussion. As a result, this has a negative effect on the overall collaborative productivity of the team.

Lyon, Kim and Nevo (2010) conducted a study of 23 virtual world users in a multinational company and found that multitasking in meetings takes place more often during teleconferences than in face-to-face meetings. It may be due to people find it socially

awkward to multi-task in a face-to-face situation (Tang, 2005). Lyon et al. (2010) argue that multitasking can bring benefits such as efficiency and effectiveness, but it can also negatively impact the ability of people to participate and pay attention in meetings. On the one hand, multitasking can improve productiveness by allowing team members to capture necessary information to fill in knowledge gaps, or to engage with someone are not present at the meeting in order to change an agenda. On the other hand, multitasking may cause people to be distracted, leading to lack to attention to the meeting. Furthermore, co-workers at the meeting can feel that they are not able to give sufficient attention to the issues currently being discussed.

Wasson (2004) produced a field-study in a company that had considerable experience with collaborating virtually and found that multitasking could "enhance employee productivity when properly managed, but that it also had potential downsides" (p.47). Multi-tasking enables participants to spend their time in a more efficient manner. However, it may reduce the productivity of a team if participants are insufficiently skilled at distributing attention or unable to quickly distinguish relevant from irrelevant topics. The author concludes that, overall, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks.

As Wasson (2004) discussed, despite multi-tasking being a salient aspect of virtual meetings, this activity has not been investigated fully by previous studies. Current literature shows contradictory perspectives on multi-tasking, while some find that it is advantageous to multi-task during meetings, others find that it has negative effects on some aspects of meetings. This conflicting view of multi-tasking can offer a promising avenue for future research (Lyon et al., 2010).

2.3.7 Virtual leadership

Leadership and styles of leadership

Leadership has been seen as one of the main reasons for team-based work systems failing (Katzenbach, 1997). There is widespread agreement that team performance and effectiveness can be greatly affected by the team leaders (Morgeson, 2005; Zaccaro and Klimoski, 2002). Berson and Avolio (2004) note that despite there being numerous styles of leadership, the two most relevant to virtual teams are: transactional and transformational. Transactional and transformational leadership styles have both been examined by a number of previous studies on teams that communicate using mainly technology (Sivasubramaniam, Murray, Avolio, and Jung, 2002). The focus for this study, with regards to virtual team leadership, will be on transactional and transformational styles of leadership.

The concepts of transformational and transactional leadership were first introduced by Burns (1978) in his treatment of political leadership. Bass (1985) expanded Burn's theory with several additions. Bass (1985, 1990, 1999) established that transactional leaders prefer motivating their team members to satisfy the expectations of their leader whereas transformational leaders motivate their team members to move beyond their team leader's expectations.

Transformational leadership aims at motivating people and focus on developing new opportunities for staff in an organization, whereas transactional leadership centres around the use of power and authority manipulation (Tucker, Georgia, Russell, College, and Emory, 2004). Transactional leaders view the relationship between them and their followers as a transaction. They offer their team members rewards and, in some cases, threaten them with sanctions and, in return, expect team members to deliver according to expectations (Bass and Avolio, 1993). In contrast, transformative leaders encourage change in an individual's habits and way of working. (Bass, 1990). Transformational

leaders are skilled at changing beliefs and values of team members. They try to motivate team members to go above their own interests and work for the benefit of the whole team, as well as agreeing on a commitment from them on the team's mission and goals. (Den Hartog and Koopman, 2001; Maduka et., 2018).

Transformation leadership attempts to improve the confidence of team members and encourages the belief that they are capable of success. This contributes directly to the group's efficiency. (Guzzo, Yost, Campbell and Shea, 1993). A transformational style encourages team members with motivation and inspiration. Followers are inspired with confidence and encouraged to work over and above expectations. There are four key factors that contribute to transformational leadership: idealised influence, individual motivation, motivation through inspiration, and intellectual stimulation. Firstly, idealised influence encourages team members to identify more with their leader which enables growth of respect and trust. Secondly, inspirational motivation is when a leader can clearly speak of an ideal future, of successful results following the task in hand. The team leader is optimistic in this communication. Thirdly, individual consideration is a term used when leaders understand that each employee is different with their own set of needs and abilities, and then makes themselves available as a mentor help those individuals achieve their goals. Finally, intellectual stimulation is used when leaders challenge their team members to re-evaluate their own ideas and to grow empathy with other employees by understanding different viewpoints on various sensitive issues they may face at work (Breevaart et al., 2014).

Purvanova and Bono (2009) conducted an experimental study of thirty-nine leaders of both physical and virtual teams. They found that a transformational leadership style was much more effective in virtual teams that only use technology to communicate. Leaders who identify and increase their transformational leadership habits in virtual teams were able to benefit from greater team performance levels. Similarly, in a recent case study, research

which aims to identify the various competencies that effective virtual team leadership requires for success, Maduka et al. (2018) explored that transformation leadership characteristics must be evaluated when choosing leaders for virtual teams due to the higher likelihood of success when a team is led using this style. Hunsaker and Hunsaker (2008) argue that transformational leadership garners more success than transactional leadership in virtual teams because reward, punishment or even just exception does not appear to generate required outcomes to a great extent in a virtual setting.

It is more tricky to manage virtual teams than traditional co-located teams. Virtual teams present unique communication and leadership challenges when compared with traditional face-to-face teams (Charlier et al. 2016; Nunamaker, Reinig, and Brigg (2009).

A requirement has arisen for a new classification of leadership styles for virtual team leads. (Mogale and Sutherland, 2010), new leadership approaches that can explain how leadership is best practiced in electronically mediated environment and what kind of leaders make virtual teams succeed (Lilian, 2014).

Avolio, Kahai, and Dodge (2001, p.617) define virtual leadership as "a social influence process mediated by advanced information technologies to produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour, and/or performance with individuals, groups, and/or organizations". Virtual team leadership is still in its infancy and trying to make a mark on management theory today (Zhang and Fjermestad, 2006) and only limited research is available on the necessary behaviours and style required for the effective leadership of world-wide virtual teams (Lahenius and Jarvenpaa, 2004). There is a need for much more research so that virtual team leadership can be better understood. (Hambley, O'Neill, and Kline, 2007).

Virtual team leadership competencies

Existing literature presents numerous definitions of competencies. Generally, competencies have been defined with terms describing knowledge, skills, behaviours, values, and personal traits (Jokinen, 2005). For instance, the United States Office of Personnel Management states that a competency is "a measurable pattern of knowledge, skill, abilities, behaviours, and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully" (Rodriguez, Patel, Bright, Gregory and Gowing, 2002, p.310). In a similar vein, Osa (2003, p.37) described competency as "the combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities which are relevant to a particular job position and which, when acquired, allow a person to perform a task or function at a high level of proficiency''. Van Wert (2004, p.10) suggested that competencies may involve both professional and personal facets. The way we apply expertise to our work depends on our professional competencies, while personal competencies refer to skills, attitudes, and values that underlie the work.

Little research has been done to understand what the required skills are for virtual managers (Mogale and Sutherland, 2010). Traditional, co-located leadership has well-known competencies, but virtual team leadership also require competencies, and these are different with some even undefined (Kramer, 2005). Based on three years' research, Caulat (2006) found out that, in some cases, effective ways of managing and leading in traditional face-to-face settings may actually have the opposite of the desired in virtual situations. The author emphasized that effective management of virtual teams is crucial but not sufficient: there is a genuine requirement for virtual leadership in its own right. Managing virtual teams involves significant and complex challenges across time zones, geographical distances and disparate cultures. These challenges must be managed and that required newly defined management techniques (Lahenius and Jarvenpaa, 2004).

A virtual team leadership style is very influential to the virtual team's performance. (Hertel, Geister, and Konradt, 2005). Pauleen (2003a, p.161) notes that "virtual team leaders are often the nexus of a virtual team and that effective leadership strategies can counter otherwise challenging aspects of virtual team work". Virtual leaders lacking specific core leadership competencies usually cannot develop high-performing teams (Hunsaker and Hunsaker, 2008). If there are not enough competent virtual team leads then tasks and projects being executed by the virtual teams run the risk of outright failure. (Weisband, 2013). Research shows that less than thirty per cent of virtual teams are considered to be successful and effective (Goodboy, 2005). Caulat (2006) suggested that the primary differentiator between low and high performing virtual teams is the ability to develop virtual leaders who are, in turn, are able to develop then lead virtual teams.

Shachaf and Hara (2005) suggests four dimensions of effective virtual team leadership:

(1). Communication: regular, concise and prompt. Communication is used to explain and clarify work delivered to the team. The team is provided with near-constant feedback.

(2). Understanding: the leader is aware of each team member's daily schedule. They listen and to team members' feedback and care about issues brought to them by the team. They show personal interest in team members and make effort to know them.

(3). Role clarity: the leader ensures the role of every team member is clearly defined. They assert authority when required and act as a mentor.

(4). Leadership attitude: the leader maintains a confident and assertive attitude without seeming bossy or arrogant. They show caring and understanding at each team member's own level and maintains this constant attitude during the project life cycle.

Zhang and Fjermestad (2006) presented four characteristics of a virtual team, named as physical distance, communicational distance, organisational distance and cultural distance. The authros also pointed out three virtual team leader traits: communication competency, environmental alertness, and influence power. They assert that the ability of the leader to

communicate is critical to the leadership success in key team activities such as communicating goals, sharing information, giving feedback, encouraging followers through motivational talk, etc.

Mogale and Sutherland (2010) conducted a descriptive study of managers and virtual team members who, at the time, worked for global organisations in permanent virtual teams and based throughout the world. The authors come up with findings about the enabling and inhibiting factors for leading global virtual teams. Based on those findings, they produced a force field analysis, presenting the top ten main enablers that improve the productiveness of the virtual team and the top ten main essential hindrences of virtual team efficacy. The influencing strength of each element is indicated by the length of its respective indicator arrow. This provides a practical guideline for global virtual team managers to improve the performance of their teams by place more focus on the specific enablers and diminish the influence of identified inhibitors.

High performing virtual team

Inhibiting factors

Lack of trust

Not considering different time zones when setting up meetings

Difficulty in communicating with people from other cultures

Lack of feedback and coaching

Delays in resolving conflicts

Lack of proper tools for communication

Misunderstanding instruction given

Lack of shared knowledge and cross-team learning

Inability to make decisions in the absence of the manager

Lack of knowledge about virtual team environment

Building strong team identity

Celebrating successes

Meeting face-to-face as a team at least once every 2 months

Data system accessible to everyone

Using the right technology to communicate

Manager understanding different working environments

Team members being able to work independently

Knowing how to build a good relationship without face-to-face

Low performing virtual team

Figure 10: The enabling and inhibiting factors for leading multinational virtual teams

Source: Mogale and Sutherland (2010)

Some researchers review literature and indicate that the following competencies are essential for leadership in virtual teams to be effective and for the teams to achieve success. Table 4 showed the similarity and differencies between the three authors.

Competencies required for effective leadership in global virtual teams		
Maduka et al. (2018)	Johnson (2010)	Mogale and Sutherland (2010)
Ability to build trust	Trust building	Building trust
Ability to build team orientation and integration		
Goal direction		
		Providing clarity around goals and roles
Effective communication	Communication	Communication
		Information equity
Ability to provide constant feedback		Constant feedback within the team
Operational coordinating and conflict resolution ability		
		The ability to motivate and inspire
		Selection
Technology skills/ knowledge	Bringing value added business and technical skills that give them credibility	Technology
Awareness: activity awareness, process awareness, social awareness		
	Having an interest and sensitivity in new cultures	
Quality decision making	Being prepared to make decision and deal with complexity	
Ability to monitor changes in environmental conditions	Being open-minded and flexible thinking	
Personal characteristics	Personal attributes	
Reliability	Be resilent, resourceful, optimistic and energetic	
	Honesty and integrity	
	Having a stable personal life and, when applicable, a family that supports their global commitment to work	

Table 4: Competencies required for effective leadership in global virtual teams

(Source: Maduka et al., 2018; Johnson, 2010; Mogale and Sutherland, 2010)

The literature reveals the many different leadership styles and numerous competencies that are critical for effective leadership in virtual teams. The present study will not address all of these competencies in detail but focus on the building trust and communication as these core elements has emerged in literature as the most required virtual leadership competencies. Some additional factors will also be discussed.

Building trust

As Goodboy (2005) suggests, factors that determine the success or failure of virtual teams can be divided in three primary categories: team formation, team communication, and trust and collaboration.

According to Cisco, as cited in Kirkman et al (2002, p.69), lack of trust "can undermine every other precaution taken to ensure successful virtual work arrangements". Despite the importance of trust, building trust in a virtual setting is not easy (Cheng et al., 2013). As Sheridan (2012) argue, the issue of trust is one of the greatest challenges of managing virtual employees, if not the greatest. It can be easier to build trust with a co-located team than with a virtual team (Gazor, 2012). There is enough evidence that co-located colleagues trust each other much more than purely virtual colleagues. (Rocco et al., 2001).

People's sense of trust is developed with every interaction with one another (Mancini, 2010). Virtual teams are at disadvantage because their interactions are performed over communications technology and across time zones and great geographical distances with only limited face-to-face communication (Chae, 2016). Jarveenpaa (1998) highlights several issues that cause problems when building trust within a virtual team: time, distance, culturally different and geographically separated members, and the reliance on communication technology.

As trust is a critical factor for virtual teams, it is important to explore what leadership-related traits, skills, and behavioural patterns may generate and bolster the atmosphere trust

in virtual settings (Lilian, 2014). Brake (2005) argue that a critical competence in virtual team leadership is an ability to build trust if they expect that team to be successful. Being able to build trust is particularly valuable during the formation of virtual teams.

Establishing and maintaining trust is critical for the successful forming and development of all teams (Gazor, 2012). Trust can create a significant influence on how team members share their knowledge and generally results in better performance (Park and Lee, 2014).

The literature points out that establishing trust and identity in the early stages of the team's formation should also be done through face-to-face meetings. (Lahenius and Jarvenpaa 2004; Curseu et al, 2008). Rocco (1998) argue that co-located meetings are far better at enabling the development of trust than relying on pure technology such as email. If new virtual team members, who are strangers to each other before team formation and only communicate via electronic means, are encouraged to get together for some sort of co-located group exercise they end up outperforming new teams who have formed without such a meeting.

Unfortunately, getting teams to one place for a co-located exercise can be expensive so alternatives for a physical meet-up need to be found. A study conducted by Zhang et al. (2002) compared three information sources (social chat, the photo, and a resume) used by Moore et al. (1999) and ran a comparison with co-located, face-to-face meet-ups. The result shows that to establish trust among virtual employees then face-to-face meet-ups are the most effective, if done beforehand. However, asking the team members to swap various social details through informal, interactive chat services as the team is forming can establish trust nearly as effectively, but exchanging pure text-based and static information (such as a personal information sheet) is not. Kirkman et al. (2002) share the same view with Zhang et al (2002) regarding positive impact of early social activities. It is more likely that trust among virtual teams might be developed if team members get engaged in early social interactions in the very beginning of the team's life cycle.

It is argued that trust can be built over time (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Brown et al., 2004). The question is, what do virtual team managers need to do to constantly enhance trust? Johnson (2010) mentions that a requirement for heightened awareness of the team's make-up and where they fit within the organization are critical for understanding how the team can start to build up trust and keep it going. In additional, factors such as honesty, open-mindedness, cultural sensitivity, and optimism will help to boost a trusting environment. Hunsaker and Hunsaker (2008) suggest a leader can do five things to build trust in virtual teams dispersed around the world. These are:

(1) Create face time: This can involve physical, one-to-one face time, or where this is impossible, a digital directory or "yearbook" which contains photographs of team members, a brief bio and description of their interests. People can also use this directory to get a better sense of who their colleagues are.

(2) Set goals and expectations: Virtual managers should provide clear details of plans and their expectations. Schedules for checkpoint meeting must be set-up early and agreed by all team members.

(3) Provide ongoing feedback: Honest feedback can be used by the whole team and individual members to establish their progress on tasks and projects and allows them to make any required changes.

(4) Show-case team member competences: Virtual managers must define roles clearly and ensure that all team members are clear on each other's role. At the same time, specific areas of expertise within the team must also be highlighted.

(5) Foster cultural understandings: This is seen as one of the most challenging issues in global virtual teams. Team members may feel disregard and distrust if cultural issues are not deal with properly. Language barriers may cause problems but communication via online chat sessions can be an easier option for those who struggle slightly to be heard when not speaking their native language.

Virtual managers must ensure that their team members feel included and part of a team. That they are not feeling isolated. Virtual managers should build an atmosphere of inclusion to build trust and support (Edwards and Wilson, 2004). Germain and McGuire (2014) suggested that building an online company culture and setting up online communities for team members to participate in will help the team maintina regular, constant communication amongst its members.

The foundation of any successful relationship is trust and this is especially so when forming a team. If all team members recognise that each other can be relied on to complete work to a high standard then a high level of trust exists in the team. (Gazor, 2012). Gibson and Cohen (2003) recommend that regular virtual team meetings, one-to-one as well as many-to-many conversations, can bolster the team solidarity. Constructive and regular feedback is also essential in building trust over time, either face-to-face, over the phone, or via electronic mediated communications. The use of communication media with high symbol variety and immediacy of feedback can help to avoid misunderstandings of task-related discussions (Maruping and Agarwal, 2004).

Researchers (e.g. Anderson and Shane, 2002; Prasad and Akhilesh, 2002) highlight the need for virtual team members to leverage online tools such as video conferencing, virtual communication software and social network sites to allow team members to get familiar with each other and learn more about each other's background and experiences.

Holton (2001, p.36) notes that:

> "Trust develops through frequent and meaningful interaction, where individuals learn to feel comfortable and open in sharing their individual insights and concerns, where ideas and assumptions can be challenged without fear or risk of repercussion and where diversity of opinion is valued over commonality or compliance".

Therefore, she suggests virtual teams should exercise caring talk, personal conversations and storytelling, as these create "a mood of support and encourage self- disclosure and the sharing of feelings" (p.36).

Handy (1995) poses a question regarding whether virtual teams can effectively function despite a lack of frequent face-to-face interaction, and he found that "trust needs touch" (p.46). Despite this, several authors claim it is possible to build trust in virtual teams without face-to-face interaction (e.g. Pauleen and Yoong, 2001; Lin, Standing and Liu, 2008), but many believe that co-located, face-to-face meetings are too critical for building trust and, in some cases, repairing trust that has been previously broken (Nohria and Eccles, 1992; O'Hara-Deveraux and Johansen, 1994). In virtual teams, trust requires a great deal face-to-face interaction (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1998. Bloch and Whiteley (2009) agree that face-to-face-meetings reinforce and enhance relationships and team effectiveness. Managers should therefore ensure that they make dedicated time to meet in person, even if only occasionally.

Burtha and Connaughton (2004) suggests that occasional face-to-face meet-ups should be included in project schedules and budgets to enhance the team leaders' profile, allow to acknowledge challenges faced by the team, allow interpersonal relationships to build between team members and team leaders, improve team members' awareness of their virtual leaders' challenges and bolster the building of trust and social capital.

Effective Communication

Johnson (2010) asserts that competencies that contribute to good virtual leadership are built from different roles, responsibilities and issues that a virtual leader encounters. Clear and effective communication is critical for any leader but is especially so for virtual team leaders who are restricted in their communication methods by the available technology. Anderson et al (2007), Bergiel et al. (2008) and Gazor (2012) suggest that effective

communication is a core leadership competence required for virtual team success, at every stage of team development. They further state that quality and quantity of communication provided by virtual team leaders is critical and vital for developing and maintaining trust.

Based on findings from a study of 244 employees at a medium-sized, Australian company, Zeffane et al. (2011) provide practical guidelines on communication and how it can develop trust and employee. Following are some highlights:

(1). Whether senior management are seen as effective communicators is the factor that has biggest impact on an trust within an organisation.

(2). Mistrust beings when communication stops or breaks-down. This is when gossip, misunderstandings, rumours and misrepresentations seep in and can contribute to a climate of mistrust.

(3). Managers' communication ability, including listening, had one of the greatest effects of team members commitment to the team and the entire company

(4). In order to encourage an environment of trust and to enable trusting relationships with teams, senior managers must communicate well with their staff and do this as honestly, clearly and directly as possible, especially during uncertain times.

The authors continued to express their caution that today, some managers can be pre-occupied with direction and often forget to listen. Those with suggestions are too often seen as complainers or troublemakers, and thus many employees decide to "leave their brains at the door". In this mode, no one can participate, be involved or be committed to the organisation and hence have not trust for management.

Bloch and Whiteley (2009) wrote a book called "How to manage in a flat world" based on a research which involves a virtual international team of over seventy people, and they note that:

"Communication is not just about e-mails, slide presentations, and video-conferences. Listening is the foundation to communication, and the biggest complaint heard in many instances is: "They don't listen to me"" (p.134)

Team members' perceptions of their leaders communication effectiveness and satisfaction are generally associated with effective team leadership, as well as the ability of the leader to clearly establish roles within a team (Kayworth and Leidner, 2001). Bloch and Whiteley (2009) state that, if team members do not understand the roadmap, the responsibilities lies with the communicator, not the people. It is recommended that virtual managers should also try to be available for impromptu conversations as formal and informal communication both play a crucial role in enhancing team cohesiveness and effectiveness.

Crowley (2005) described how informal communication can be used as a crucial tool when building teams, but that this is tougher for virtual teams to accomplish. Managers of virtual teams must balance between formal and informal communication in order to build relationships with their team members. A balance of 20% relationship versus 80% task time is recommended by the author.

Culturally diverse teams are more likely to suffer from misinterpretation problems due to unfamiliarity of communication methods and etiquettes, which vary among different cultures (Kayworth and Leidner, 2002). To communication across cultures, leaders must develop a style that can cope with the uncertainty in virtual communication, where there can be a lot of ambiguity due to the pure virtual style communication. (Pauleen, 2003a; Bergiel et al 2008). Virtual team leaders are recommended to pay particular attention to close the feedback loop effectively, be proactive when choosing to communicate, avoid making assumptions, establish clear thresholds for escalation, and maintain a sense of humour (Brown et al., 2010).

Poole and Zhang (2005) present an argument that "it appears that in comparison to traditional teams, virtual team leaders play a more important role in scheduling and

structuring the communication practices as well as the work process" (p.377). Effective communication is essential to secure a constant flow of information regarding issues being faced by the team and changes to the team's goals and project requirements (Lohikoski, Kujala, Haapasalo, Aaltonen and Ala-Mursula, 2016). However, as Gazor (2012) posits, the use communication technologies may pose a significant challenge for virtual leaders to manage their teams. Because these technologies are susceptible to disruption or damage, which may result in failure of the communication process and diminished productivity, leaders should be able to provide a tool for communication between members in these cases. Maduka et al. (2018) highlight that besides investing in advanced communication technologies, organisations should provide training in communication methods to virtual team leaders to ensure they are confident when interacting with their team, as this in turn leads to more success and better performance.

It is noted that sometimes members may present themselves as a problem in communication process. For instance, some people may refuse to share information and knowledge across team (Gazor, 2012). Knowledge sharing is a requirement for the team to build trust and improve performance (Stork, 2000). It is particularly crucial in globally distributed teams whose member work remotely, as sharing is what helps to spread expertise and therefore support learning even at a distance. Gazor (2012) suggests that team leader must call members to persuade and encourage collaboration so the team can achieves harmony and consensus. Kotlarsky and Oshri (2005) conducted an ethnographic study of software development projects being implemented by teams distributed throughout the globe and suggested a practical guide to enhance collaborative work in global virtual teams. Some recommendations are presented as below:

- Social spaces between members are important and companies should introduce processes and mechanisms that permit these spaces.

- It is important that the team takes part in activities before and after co-located meetings to reinforce collaboration between members. For example, some socially interactive events could be group language classes (before the meeting) or a management floor walk around the team. Key team members could be encouraged to visit remote locations to sit in on face-to-face meetings.

- Meeting regularly either virtually or, on occasion, with short team visits can boost the feeling of inclusivity for all team members

- Select a reliable variety of communication tools that can be used to enable team members to retain high levels of participation and ensure the quality of communication is high. Tools such as, video conferencing software, social media forums and even email.

- Resources should be dedicated by Management to ensuring human-related problems are addressed swiftly and that the virtual team-members remain socialable.

Technology skills and knowledge

Virtual leadership effectiveness is demonstrated through information and communication technology. Thus, the quality of available technology and employees' skills plays a crucial role in virtual teams' success.

At the organisational level, Caulat (2006) suggested that a reliable simple-to-use, well-supported technology is an essential condition for virtual team works well. However, the author noted that team awareness of any opportunities to develop, or even change, the supported technology was actually low at the time of her study in 2006. It is noted that organisations tended to choose the lowest common denominator and stuck with it. In general, the most widely used communication were teleconferencing and NetMeetings, while videoconferencing was much less frequent use.

At individual level, virtual managers should keep up with the latest technology medium and maximise theirs use to reinforce messages (Bloch and Whiteley, 2009).

Cascio and Shurygailo (2003) argued a core competency required by successful leadership is the capacity of virtual managers to know how and when to use the communication technology available, and to acknowledge the needs to educate team members on proper use.

2.4 Thematic content analysis grid

As Garrard (2017) suggested, a thematic content analysis grid enables essential information to be gathered for this study and allows researchers to appraise the considerable amount of literature gathered for the research. In order to generate an overall understanding, the present study attempts to briefly review previously published work and reports on the topic, presented in table 5 below.

Theme	Authors	Content Analysis
Characteristics of global virtual teams	Knoll and Jarvenpaa, 1995; Townsend et al.,1998; Lipnack and Stamps, 2000; Dube and Pare, 2001; Fisher and Fisher, 2001; Montoya-Weiss et al., 2001; Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Martin et al., 2004; Brandl and Neyer, 2009; Cissé and Wyrick, 2010; Cruz-Cunha, 2009; Schweitzer and Duxbury, 2010; Mukherjee et al., 2012; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020	- Geographically and/or temporally dispersed - Scattered across the globe - Located in different time zones - Working hours can be different, shift patterns implemented, assigned different working days - Rarely or even never see or interact in traditional face-to-face fashion. Interaction is usually through communications technologies. - Each team member may represent a completely different culture. - Work assigned to virtual teams is not usually different.
Advantages	Lipnack and Stamps, 1997; Kurland and Bailey, 1999; Jungalwalla, 2000; Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Hinds, Kiesler and Kiesler, 2002; Orlikowski., 2002; Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Lagerstrom and Andersson, 2003; Lunnan and Barth, 2003; Furst et al., 2004; Zakaria et al., 2004; Hertel et al., 2005; Bergiel et al., 2008; Cissé and Wyrick, 2010; Gressgard, 2011; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020	- Seen as a critical tool for organisations that want access to world-wide expertise without worrying about the physical location of employees. - Eliminating time and space barriers - Reduces the cost of coordination - Offers the promise of accelerated product delivery at minimal cost. - Foster better innovation and creativity: with people from different perspectives and knowledge bases, high-quality, innovative business solutions are more likely to occur - Enhances organisational learning, knowledge sharing and management - Improves organisational agility, increasing their global competitiveness - Allows companies to reap the benefits of knowledge and innovation spread throughout the world and to operate in such a way that mutually benefits their market and its ability to respond.
Challenges	Gould, 1997; Lipnack and Stamps, 1997; Warkentin, Sayeed and Hightower, 1997; Van den Bulte and Moenaert, 1998; Wheatley and Wilemon, 1999; Cascio, 2000; Olson and Olson, 2000; Dube and Pare, 2001; Furst et al., 2004; Kirkman et al., 2004; Hertel et al., 2005; Bergiel et al., 2008; Dubé and Robey, 2009; Daim et al. 2012; Hansen, Hope	- Virtual teams confront more challenges, and those challenges can be unique when compared to a co-located team. -- Virtual teams present greater complexity due to the differences in laws, regulations and business processes - Teams dispersed geographically and developed through electronic means may face challenges in work co-ordination and completion. - Key challenges are the collaboration challenge, the leadership challenge and the challenge of trust.

	and Moehler, 2012; Chatfield et al., 2014; Siebdrat, Hoegl, and Ernst, 2014; RW3 CultureWizard , 2014; Fernandez and Jawadi, 2015; Dube and Marnewick, 2016; Dulebohn and Hoch, 2017; Mukherjee and Natrajan, 2017; Hill and Bartol, 2018; Maduka et al., 2018; RW3 CultureWizard, 2018; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020; RW3 CultureWizard, 2020	- Virtual teams are dependent on technology in ways that co-located teams are not. - Issues in building relationships, managing conflict, understanding accent and lack of responsiveness - Supervision of team members becomes difficult. For instance, preventing unproductive use of time. -Virtual teams will incur additional cost for any additional technology required, along with training and data security requirements. - There is a signification cost to the relocation of team members for specific projects when trying to avoid the drawbacks of teamwork associated with distance
Trust in global virtual teams	Fukuyama, 1995; Hosmer, 1995; Mayer et al., 1995; Bennett, 1996; Hart and Saunders, 1997; Lipnack and Stamps, 1997; Ambrose and Johnson, 1998; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; Malhotra and Murnighan, 2002; Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Panteli, 2005; Zigurs, 2003; Buhlmann, 2006; Long et al., 2010; Mancini, 2010; Sarker et al., 2011; Vanhala, Puumalainen and Blomqvist, 2011; Schilcher et al., 2011; Gazor, 2012; Crisp and Jarvenpaa, 2013; Pinjani and Palvia, 2013; Rose and Schlichter, 2013; Zhu, Newman, Miao, and Hooke, 2013; Boies et al., 2015; Singh et al., 2015; Flammia, Cleary and Slattery,2016; Lohikoski, Kujala, Haapasalo, Aaltonen, and Ala-Mursula, 2016; Robbins, 2016; Vanhala and Ritala, 2016; Vanhala, Heilmann, and Salminen, 2016	- Trust is an essential factor to virtual team's success, however the concept of trust is not explicitly defined. - Trust is a need-to-have characteristics in virtual teams. - Virtual teams require a high level of trust, compared to co-located teams. - There are different types of trust within organisations. - Impersonal trust is seen as the personal expectations about the employer's capability and fairness. - Interpersonal trust refers to the confidence of an individual in their team members and leaders. - Swift trust is a form of trust occurring in temporary systems. In swift trust theory, a team assumes trust from the start, and later adjust it accordingly. - Task-based trust or role performance trust is a belief that other team members can be relied on to complete their tasks. This form of task is significantly critical for virtual teams. - Altruistic trust refers to when team members trust that their leaders act to promote their welfare, even at a cost to themselves. - Affective bond trust reflects the extent to which an individual can build friendships with others in the team and develop long-term relationships. - Cultural issues plays a significant role in building trust - Different cultures with different ways of interpreting of perceptions and expectation may lead to confusion, frustration and affect trust in global virtual teams.

Communication in global virtual teams	Galegher and Kraut, 1994; Burke and Chidambaram, 1996; Bordia, 1997; Chawla and Krauss, 1994; DeSanctis and Monge, 1999; Maznevski and Chudoba, 2000; Baltes et al., 2002; Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Flanagin and Waldeck, 2004; Wasson, 2004; González and Mark, 2005; Anderson, McEwan, Bal and Carletta, 2007; Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007; Bloch and Whiteley, 2009; Lyon, Kim and Nevo, 2010; Berry, 2011b; Zeffane, Tipu and Ryan, 2011; Sheridan, 2012; Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra, 2014; Charlier, Stewart, Greco and Reeves, 2016; Lohikoski et al., 2016; Mukherjeem and Natrajan, 2017; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020	- Trust, communication and leadership are the foundation of modern business. Communication allows leaders to develop trust within their team and once trust has been achieved, goals can be established and achieved with the full support of their team members. - Virtual team members are dependent on communication technology to co-ordinate their works. - In virtual teams, there is a lack of face-to-face contact, and hence less social and political contextual cues and non-verbal cues, which might cause misunderstandings. - Virtual team members are seen as less likely to share sensitive information and engage in off-task and social communication, which ultimately can have a negative effect on collaborative performance. - There are inconsistencies in literature regarding the use of computer-mediated communication and team effectiveness, showing a disconnect between field-base and controlled setting studies using student groups as respondents. - There has been little effort in investigating the challenges faced by virtual team members and their use of technologies to address issues.
Virtual leadership	Guzzo, Yost, Campbell and Shea, 1993; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990; Bass and Avolio, 1993; Katzenbach, 1997; Jarveenpaa, 1998; Rocco, 1998; Bass, 1999; Moore et al., 1999; Avolio, Kahai, and Dodge, 2001; Rocco et al., 2001; Den Hartog and Koopman, 2001; Sivasubramaniam, Murray, Avolio, and Jung, 2002; Rodriguez, Patel, Bright, Gregory and Gowing, 2002; Kirkman et al, 2002; Zaccaro and Klimoski, 2002; Zhang et al., 2002; Osa, 2003; Berson and Avolio, 2004; Brown et al., 2004; Lahenius and Jarvenpaa, 2004; Tucker, Georgia, Russell, College, and Emory,	- A virtual team leadership is very influential to the virtual team's performance. - Transactional and transformational leadership are seen as the two most relevant styles for virtual teams. - Virtual leadership and competencies are still in their infancy and require more research. - Effective ways of managing and leading in co-located teams may not work for virtual settings. - There are a number of competencies required for effective virtual leadership, for example, understanding and environmental alertness, role clarity, influence power, leadership attitude. Trust, team building, and team communication are seen as three most critical successors for virtual teams. - Trust can be built over time. - Early social activities can help to develop trust in the very beginning of the team's life cycle.

2004; Van Wert, 2004; Brake, 2005; Jokinen, 2005; Hertel, Geister, and Konradt, 2005; Goodboy, 2005; Morgeson, 2005; Shachaf and Hara, 2005; Caulat, 2006; Zhang and Fjermestad, 2006; Hambley, O'Neill, and Kline, 2007; Curseu et al, 2008; Hunsaker and Hunsaker, 2008; Purvanova and Bono, 2009; Nunamaker, Reinig, and Brigg, 2009; Johnson, 2010; Mancini, 2010; Mogale and Sutherland, 2010; Gazor, 2012; Sheridan, 2012; Cheng et al., 2013; Weisband, 2013; Breevaart et al., 2014; Germain and McGuire, 2014; Lilian, 2014; Park and Lee, 2014; Chae, 2016; Charlier et al. 2016; Maduka et., 2018	- To build trust in a virtual team, leaders need to: create face time, set goals and expectations, provide ongoing feedback, show-case team member competences, foster cultural understanding (Hunsaker and Hunsaker, 2008), build an atmosphere of inclusion (Edwards and Wilson, 2004), maintain regular, constant communication (Germain and McGuire, 2014), exercise caring talk, personal conversation and storytelling (Holton, 2001). - Clear and effective communication is especially important for effective virtual team leadership. It helps to secure a constant flow of information and enhance team cohesiveness and effectiveness. - Sometimes global virtual team members may present themselves as a problem in communication process. Leaders need to address this issue effectively to enhance collaborative work in global virtual teams. - Virtual leadership effectiveness is demonstrated through information and communication technology. Thus, technology skills and knowledge of virtual managers plays a key role in virtual team's success.

Table 5: Thematic Content Analysis Grid

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

2.5 The research conceptual framework
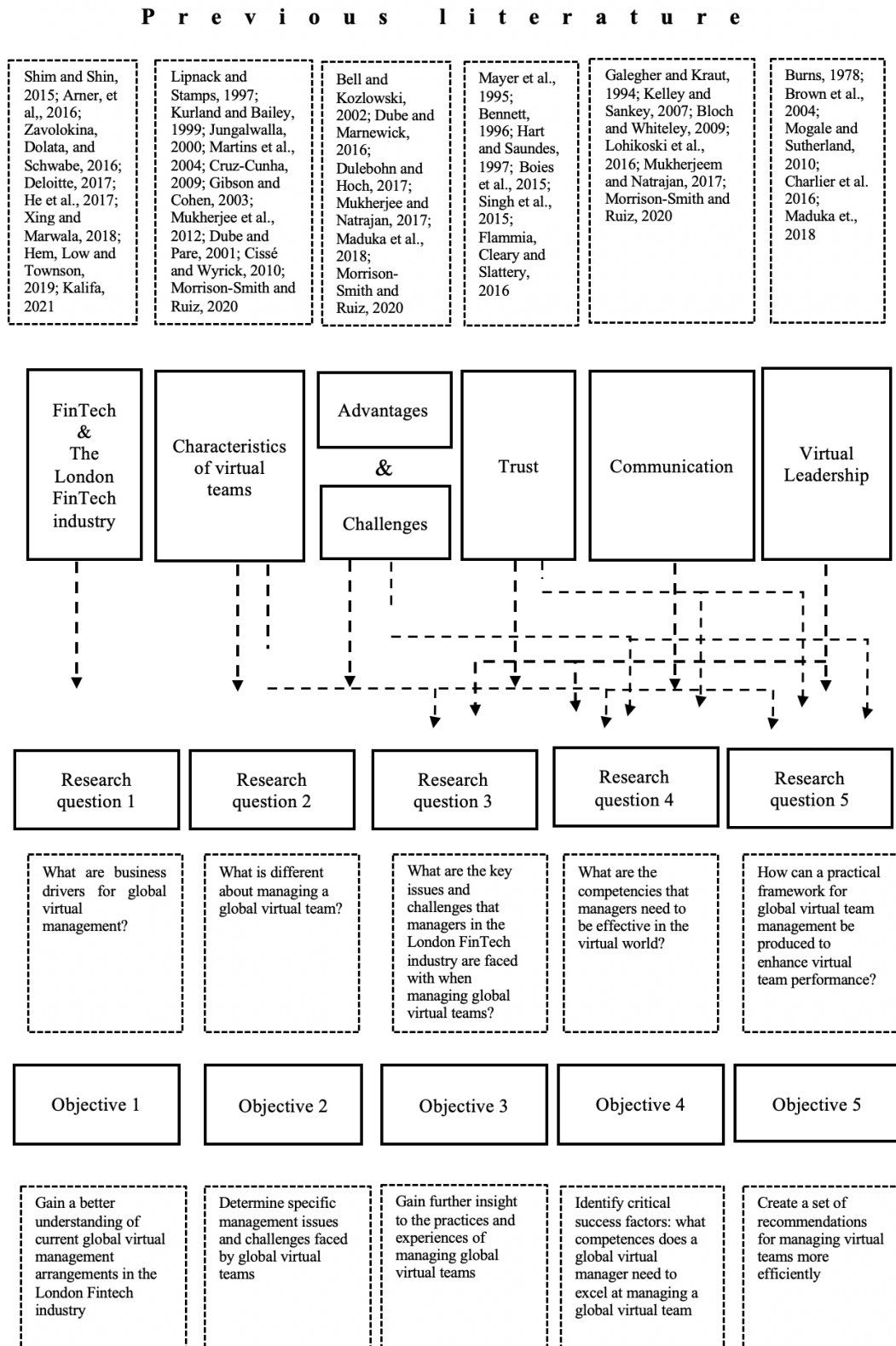
Figure 11: The research conceptual framework
(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

(The "previous literature" blocks in this figure do not mirror all the authors cited in the thematic review. A full list of all the authors cited can be found at Table 5: Thematic Content Analysis Grid.)

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2.6 Summary

This chapter outlined the evolution of FinTech and the London FinTech industry. A FinTech historical development timeline was presented, which covered the path of FinTech from 1866 until the present year of 2021. The timeline provides a quick, visual summary of the evolution of the industry. Challenges and opportunities for the FinTech industry caused by increased uncertainty from Covid-19 pandemic were also discussed in review with lessons from history. The needs for the industry to shift their approach and bring in more innovative solutions was also identified. In addition, the development of virtual teams, its definitions and characteristics were reviewed and compared. The advantages and disadvantages of virtual teams were presented. Key issues of trust, communication and virtual leadership were reviewed. Through research of existing literature on the topic, literature gap was addressed. Altogether, these provide a firm ground for the present research, which attempts to contribute to the current literature in virtual management and provide useful insights into mastering the challenges of managing global virtual teams faced by the London FinTech industry.

In the following chapter an explanation of the philosophy of the authors research will be presented, along with an overview of the methodology and reasons behind choosing grounded theory to answer all questions of this thesis.

Chapter 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research is described as a systematic and methodical investigation into a research question with a view to generating knowledge (Collis and Husseys, 2013). In order for researchers to represent findings in response to the research questions, research methodology plays a crucial role.

With a focus on global virtual team management in the London FinTech industry, the objectives of this study are: (1) gain a better understanding of current global virtual management arrangements in the London Fintech industry, (2) determine specific management issues and challenges faced by global virtual teams, (3) gain further insight to the practices and experiences of managing global virtual teams, (4) identify critical success factors: what competences does a global virtual manager need to excel at managing a global virtual team?, and (5) create a set of recommendations for managing virtual teams more efficiently

This chapter will discuss the research design and method used in this study, starting with a brief description of the nature and purpose of this study, followed by justification of the chosen research method and design. The key stages in the research process, data collection and data analysis techniques are presented. Finally, issues regarding validity, reliability and ethical considerations are also pointed out.

3.2 Research design

A research design is defined as "a framework for the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.40), "which explains and justifies what data is to be gathered, how and where from. It also needs to explain how the data will be analysed and how this

will provide answers to the central questions of the research" (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.38). As Birks and Mills (2011) suggest, a research design is constituted by three components: research philosophy, research methodology and research methods.

Research philosophy is a set of beliefs and assumptions about the way knowledge is developed in a particular field. It plays a profound role in constructing the research methodological choice, research strategy and data collection and analysis. (Saunders et al., 2009).

Research methodology may be understood as a set of principles that links the research philosophy to research methods (Birks and Mills, 2011). It helps to solve the research problem systematically and scientifically (Kothari, 2004). By strengthening the rational for the chosen methodology as appropriate to the research questions, credibility of the research can be enhanced, and the researcher is able to provide justification for the research process and defend the outcomes (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004; Sikes, 2004).

There are debates among scholars regarding the third component, research methods. Some authors, e.g. Bryman and Bell (2011), claim that a research method is simply a technique for collecting data. Kothari (2004) commented methods are more general. It is the methods, the behaviours and instruments used by the researcher during the course of selecting and constructing techniques. The author also highlighted that although research techniques and research methods are sometimes thought of as distinct from one another, the terms can be used interchangeably, "and when we talk of research methods, we do, by implication, include research techniques within their compass" (p.7). Keeping all this in view, research methods can refer to all the methods and techniques used to conduct the research, generate and analyse data (Kothari, 2004; Birks and Mills, 2011).

In the framework of this study, the selected research philosophy is Interpretivism, with Grounded Theory as research methodology and interviews as research method. The choice of these components of this study research design will be explained and justified in the

next sections, following the Method Maps (O'Gorman, and MacIntosh, 2014, p.50-51) in

order to ensure "a clear and structured approach".
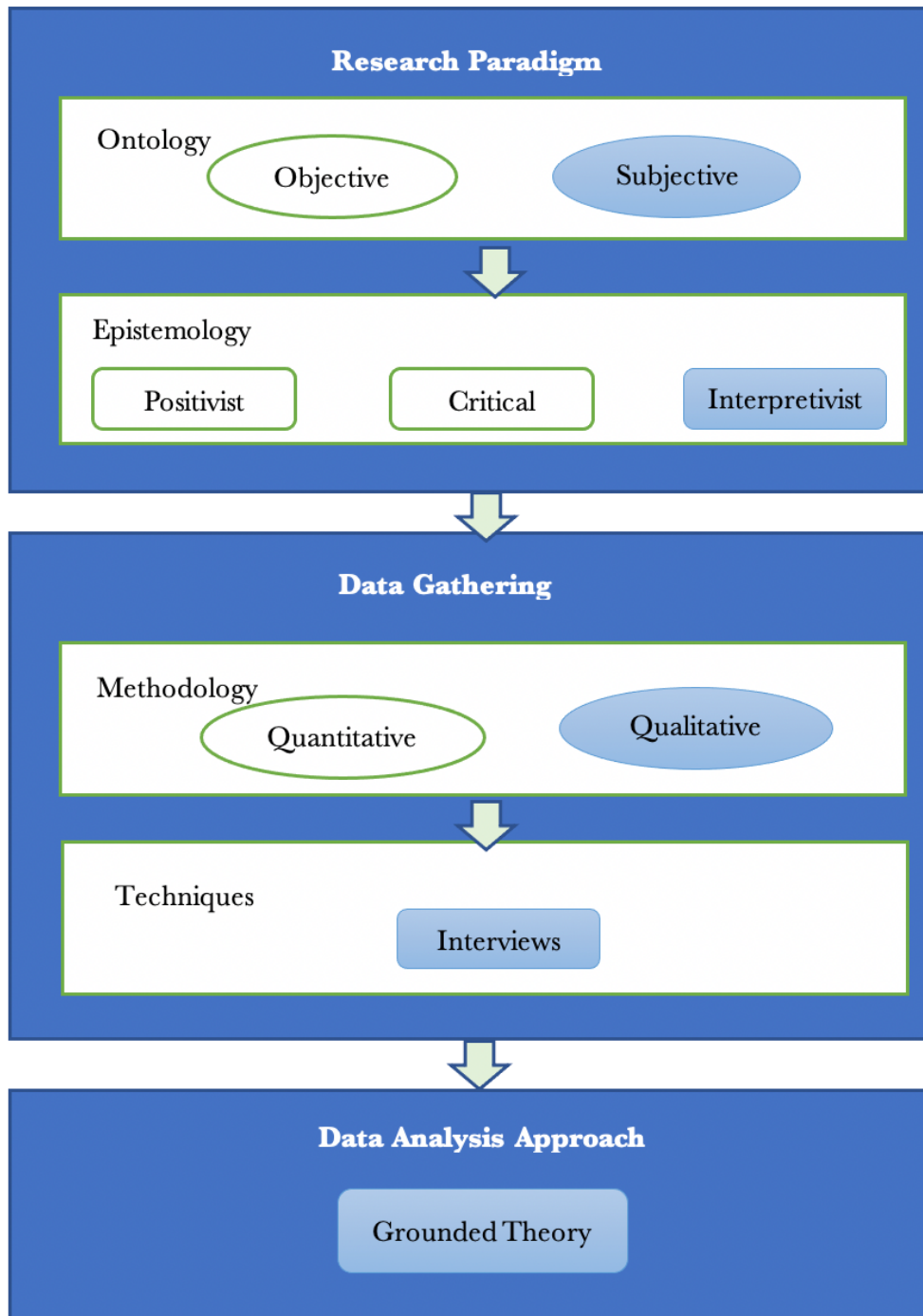
Figure 12: The Methods Map of the present research

(adapted from O'Gorman and MacIntosh, 2014)

3.3 Research philosophy

3.3.1 The three types of research assumptions

Bryman (1998, p.4) stated that a paradigm is "a cluster of beliefs and dictates which, for scientists in a particular, discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, (and) how results should be interpreted".

According to Filstead (1979, p.34), a research paradigm is defined by a 'set of interrelated assumptions about the social world which provide a philosophical and conceptual framework for the organized study of that world'.

There is philosophical consideration in every piece of research. Different types of assumption will be generated at each stage, whether researchers are consciously aware of them or not (Burrell and Morgan 1979, cited in Saunders et al., 2009). Factors such as researcher positionality, their philosophical assumptions, beliefs and values have a profound effect on all stages of methodological decision-making within research. For example, choices about which research to pursue, which methodology and methods to apply, and how to interpret the findings (Crotty 1998; Sikes, 2004; Saunders, 2009; Jackson, 2013). These assumptions inevitably shape the ultimate outcomes of the research (Kincheloe and Berry, 2004).

Awareness of the philosophical underpinning for the research in business and management can have a remarkable impact on what we do, how we conduct the research, how we understand what it is we are investigating (Johnson and Clark, 2006; Pring, 2000), and the quality of the research in general (Snape and Spencer, 2003).

There are three types of research assumptions, known as ontology, epistemology and axiology. Each philosophy has particular impacts on the research process.

Ontology is the philosophical study concerned with our belief about the nature of reality (what do we believe about the nature of reality?), and what exists, what we can know about

the world (Crotty, 1998; Saunders et al., 2009; Jackson, 2013; Snape and Spencer, 2003; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Epistemology refers to assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the ways of knowing (how do we know what we know?), its possibility (what knowledge is possible and can be attempted and what is not), its scope and legitimacy (what constitutes acceptable, valid and legitimate knowledge in a field of study) and how we distribute our knowledge to others (Burrell and Morgan,1979; Crotty, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Axiology is the branch of philosophy that deals with judgments about ethics and value system within the research process (what do we believe is true?) (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002). This includes asking researchers how they manage with their own values as well as those of their study participants (Saunders et al., 2009).

Ontological and epistemological positions are inevitable when performing research (Scotland, 2012). Whereas, at first glance, ontology may seem abstract, epistemology seems more obviously relevant and is being adopted by various business and management researchers (Saunders et al., 2009). Epistemology is seen as the central of methodology choice in terms of its purpose and goals, since research itself is concerned with developing knowledge in a particular field (Snape and Spencer, 2003).

3.3.2 The matrix's four paradigms for business and management research

In terms of systematically understanding the epistemological and ontological foundations of business research, the matrix's four paradigms of Burrell and Morgan's (1979) is influential (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2011).
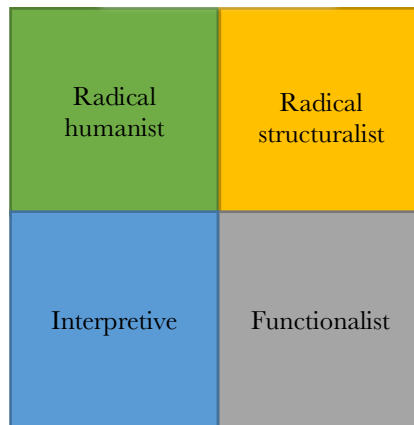
Figure 13: Four paradigms for organisational analysis

(Source: developed from Burrell and Morgan (1982) by Saunders et al., 2009)

As Saunders et al. (2009) and Bryman and Bell (2011) explained, the matrix represents four different ways of viewing the organizational and social world. Each paradigm includes assumptions, presented as either objectivist or subjectivist.

Objectivist researchers are interested in discovering universal facts and laws governing social behavior. From an objectivist view, an organisation is an objective entity and could be studied as nature is studied by natural scientists.

From a *subjectivist* viewpoint, an organisation is a social constructed product. Subjectivist researchers seek to understand different perceptions and narratives that go some way to explaining multiple social realities.

Ideological orientation is another dimension that can help to differentiate between research philosophies. In Burrell and Morgan's (1979) four paradigms, each paradigm contains assumptions regarding the purpose and function of researching regulatory or radical change in the business world.

The purpose of business and management research with *regulatory perspective* is precisely to describe what is going on in an organization, and to suggest how organizational issues can be improved with minor changes, but changes that do not radically challenge the status quo or judge it, they stay under the current operational framework (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Research with *radical change* provides a critical perspective. This approach primarily concerned with making fundamental judgment about the way things are done in the organization, the way it ought to be, and offer insights that would help to change the organization. It is noted that much of management research operating within the radical change perspective would usually be considered as critical management studies (Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

The objectivist – subjectivist put along with regulation - radical change creates the matrix's four paradigms, which provide a method for identifying four paradigmatic positions for business and management research.

Functionalist, combining the objectivist and regulation dimensions, is the dominant paradigm for the study of organisations. The principal focus of research undertaken within this framework is rational explanation and developing sets of recommendation within the current structures.

Research that operates within an *interpretative* framework is concerned with understanding an organisation's everyday activities, and using the experience of workers within those organisations to try and explain what is going on. The primary focus here is discovering irrationalities rather than changing things (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008, Saunders et al., 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2011).

Radical structuralist, located within objectivist and radical change dimensions, focuses organisational issues such as conflict patterns and hierarchical power relationships, as well

as modes of conflict. These factors are said to define the extent of oppression and structural domination that exists in organisations.

Radical humanist views an organisation as a social group, the individual members of which, must be emancipated. With subjectivist ontology, research within this paradigm primarily concerned with issues of power and politics, domination and oppression, and the need of changing the status quo.

3.3.3 Philosophical assumptions for the present research

Based on a thorough review of literature, this research has five objectives, listed as below.

(1) Gain a better understanding of current global virtual management arrangements in the London Fintech industry

(2) Determine specific management issues and challenges faced by global virtual teams

(3) Gain further insight the practices and experiences of managing global virtual teams

(4) Identify critical success factors: what competences a global virtual manager needs to excel at to be able to manage a virtual FinTech team successfully?

(5) Create a set of recommendations directed towards helping managers to manage virtual teams more efficiently.

Having the research objectives in mind, the researcher holds a view that the social nature of this study requires an interpretivist approach as the primary focus is to unveil the reality of managing global virtual teams.

As mentioned above, organisational research undertaken within interpretivism paradigm focuses on understanding organisation's everyday activities, discovering irrationalities, and explaining the fundamental meanings attached to organisational life, rather than changing

things (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008; Saunders et al, 2009). These aspects of interpretivism suit the present research requirements and objectives.

With subjectivist viewpoint, the present research focuses on understanding what managers view as the reality of managing their global virtual teams, exploring their everyday practices and their experience, what they perceive are challenging, what competencies they think are fundamental to manage such a team successfully. The research attempts to understand the research issue under the views of those who actually do the job daily, with information interpreted by the participants as they made sense of what had happened.

People have different ways of building meaning, but truth is the result of a group of individuals, or co-constructors, forming a consensus (Crotty, 1998; Pring, 2000). The interpretive paradigm accepts ideologies, it doesn't question them (Scotland, 2012). Based on provided ideologies about what is going on everyday within managing global virtual teams, the research also aims to suggest a set of recommendations directed towards helping managers to manage virtual teams more efficiently. This is consistent with the regulatory perspective.

Radical humanist	Radical structuralist
Interpretive	
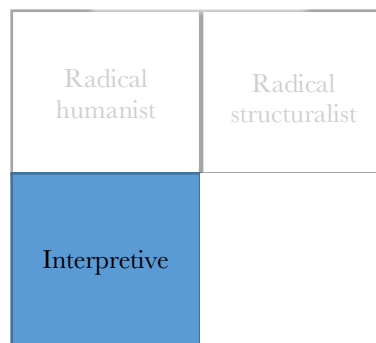
Figure 14: Philosophical assumptions for the present research

(Source: adapted from Burrell and Morgan (1982) by Saunders et al., 2009)

3.3.4 Consideration between positivist, interpretivist, and critical research

The researcher 's choice of interpretivism is made after extensive consideration with other philosophical paradigms, with a point of view that there are strengths and weaknesses in all paradigms (Cavana, Delahaye and Sekaran, 2001).

It is suggested that any one of three paradigms may contain qualitative research: positivist, interpretivist, and critical (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Punch, 1998). *Positivism* has been put into considered for the philosophy choice of this study. Positivism as a major anti-interpretivism (Gray, 2013) is more concerned with the mechanism of the world scientifically (Khan, 2014), with discovering laws that are generalizable and govern the universe (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012). Positivist researchers assume that human activity is predictable and exists in an objective world where the cause and effect of behaviour can be measured (Neuman, 2011), and all people have the same meaning systems (Cavana et al., 2001). A deductive approach is undertaken and methods often generate quantitative data (Scotland, 2012).

The researcher decided that interpretivism is more suitable and comprehensive than positivism. Interpretivism enables the researcher to gain insights into different managers' perceptions and experiences, and as a single reality about global virtual teams across different cultures and geographies is not implausible, it is more likely to be a multiple one.

Critical management studies are primarily concerned with challenging current management methods. It attempts to expose harmful effects of dominant organisational ideas and practices along with other problems and weaknesses (Saunders et al., 2009). In critical research, participants are involved in the research process, for example designing questions, collecting data, analysing information and benefiting from research (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, critical research must create an agenda of change, it must have catalytic validity (Cohen et al, 2007). These aspects of critical research are not appropriate to the present research in terms of its framework, its objectives and research requirements.

3.4 Quantitative versus Qualitative Research

Methodology is seen as "where assumptions about the nature of reality and knowledge, values, and theory and practice on a given topic come together" (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012, p.3). As a strategy of action, methodology is the reason for the selection of particular methods and to explain the questions of why, what from where and how data is collected and analysed (Crotty, 1998, Guba and Lincon, 1994).

Literature indicates two major research methodologies: quantitative and qualitative, but a combination of the two, usually referred to as mixed methods, is becoming recognised as a third possible approach (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007).

Quantitative research is rooted and more appropriate for addressing questions of prevalence, generalizability, and calibration and is considered more suited to natural science studies. Qualitative research, however, is often used in social science as it has a unique ability to deal with issues of description, interpretation, and explanation (Lee, 1999; Silverman, 2010). Qualitative research is a critical choice when attempting to understand an individual's experience and how they interpret that experience, thanks to it's value in revealing sensitive problems and complex workflows in team members, teams and their organisations, as well as how these issues and workflows can evolve over time. (Bluhm et al., 2010; Trochim, 2006).

Literature suggests that quantitative and qualitative research should not be considered as a sharp division (Hussey and Hussey, 1997; Punch, 2000). Trochim (2006) further argues that at the level of the data, there is little difference between qualitative and quantitative data as all qualitative data can be coded quantitively and all quantitative data is based on qualitative judgement. However, at the level of the assumptions that are made, the differences can be profound and irreconcilable. The author suggests, the heart of the quantitative-qualitative debate is philosophical, not methodological. Scotland (2012) comments that it's possible to trace different research methods back through methodology

and epistemology and find an ontological position. Researchers studying the same phenomenon will often use different research methods depending on their ontological and epistemological position.

As mentioned in the foregoing section, the present research adopts interpretivist epistemology, one of subjectivism which is based on real world phenomena (Scotland, 2012).

It is quite common that certain methodologies can be associated with particular paradigms, for example, a constructivist or interpretative paradigm usually deploys a qualitative methodology, while a positivistic paradigm typically utilises a quantitative methodology. However, it should be noted that this is not universally the case and no one theoretical or paradigmatic framework is correct, it is the researcher's choice to decide their own paradigmatic view and how that guide the research design to best answer the research question (Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012).

Research requirements and objectives are most important when evaluating methods for inquiry (Cassell and Johnson, 2006; Cavana et al., 2001), along with the specific research questions that need to be answered, earlier work, the research plan and expectations of contributors (Punch, 1998; Edmondson and McManus, 2007; Maruster, 2013).

In this DBA study, the primary research question needs to be answered is, "What makes for the successful management of a global virtual team in the London FinTech industry?", followed by sub-questions covering supplementary issues such as the differences between managing global virtual teams, key challenges, and essential competences.

To answer these questions, and to be able to suggest a set of recommendations to enhance virtual team performance as a research contribution, the researcher sought to explore and capture people's knowledge and experiences, their personal point of views, their ideas, and their concerns. The researcher holds a view that a qualitative approach is more adequate than using statistics to address the research questions mentioned above.

As mentioned earlier, qualitative approach excels at enabling researchers to use the language of the research to describe, in detail, the phenomena of interest in the actual language of the study participants (Trochim, 2006). It allows interviewees to "speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings" (Berg, 2007, p.96). It opens up a respondent's values and beliefs system, their rules of living, life history or everyday behaviour, mind maps and interpretative (Cavana et al., 2001; Silverman, 2010). It reveals what respondents actually do instead of what they believe they should say they do or think in surveys (Wasson, 2004).

Qualitative research allows the researcher to deploy interview questions that enable participants to provide in-depth responses that the quantitative parameters and statistic would not. Whereas, in quantitative research, the researcher quantifies results and points out issues reached by testing preconceived hypotheses (Frels and Onwuegbuzie, 2013).

As Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.19) highlighted, some areas of research naturally align themselves more with qualitative counterpart, for example, a study that aims to explore participants' own experiences with the phenomenon of interest. This study was not intended to test objective theories, but to shed light on the practices and subjective experiences of managers in managing their global virtual teams, and to highlight areas of good practices as well as potential areas of improvement. The research interests of this study are focused on "how" questions, rather than "how many" so many details of the case simply do not fit a pre-coded, standardized format of quantitative method. In addition, quantitative methods will often leave out important parts of the whole "story" due to their focus on "how many" and not "how" (Silverman, 2010), and the "story" of those managing global virtual teams is precisely what the present research is seeking.

3.5 The chosen methodology – grounded theory

3.5.1 The historical development of grounded theory

As Suddaby (2006, p.633) suggested, "like most difficult subjects, grounded theory is best understood historically". In recent years, publications have documented the early history and development of the method.

Grounded theory was collaboratively developed by two sociologists in the 1960s. They were Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser and they were researching how hospital personnel interacted with terminally ill (Glaser and Strauss, 1965, 1967, 1990; Trochim, 2006).

According to Birks and Mills (2015), in 1960, shortly after joining the University of California School of Nursing, Anselm Strauss was appointed the inaugural director of the new Department of Social and Behavioral Science.

In 1961, Barney Glaser completed his PhD at Columbia University, and Strauss recruited him to the research team for a nursing study examining the experience of dying in hospital. During this study, what is today referred to as the grounded theory approach started to develop.

In 1967, Grounded theory was introduced by Glaser and Strauss through the book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory.* The authors argued that current research was dominated by the existing theories of sociological research and emphasized the needs of a new method that would allow researchers to develop theories from data instead of using data to test already available theories (Birks and Mills, 2015). The three scholarly purposes of *Discovery* were made quite explicit: to provide the rationale for grounded theory, to put forward the specifics and logic for grounded theory, and legitimise qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1994).

Since *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* was published in 1967, it has become increasingly popular and been taken up in a broad array of fields outside its originating

domain of sociology; for example, psychology, education, health care, as well as management and organisation studies (Locke, 2000). As Locke (2000) commented, pick up and read any qualitative research article in management and business, it is pretty much likely that you will find a citation to Glaser and Strauss (1967).

However, subsequent to the publication of their first book in 1967, there has been a supposed split between the originators, Strauss and Glaser. The scholars proposed different ideas about practising grounded theory and parted company, based on two key underlying principles known as: the depth of and influence of predetermined ideas during the research process, and in data coding and analysis stages.

As originally stated, grounded theory does not start with a theory in mind. Instead, the founders of grounded theory characterised this research method as one in which theory arises from systematically obtained data which has been carefully analysed (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Glaser prefers to remain committed to the initial idea that ground theory's key purpose is exploration (Glaser, 1992), with as few preconceived ideas about the subject being studied as possible. Strauss and Corbin want to embrace a more flexible approach in which grounded theory combines generation of initial hypotheses with their subsequent verification (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). While Glaser seeks a strictly correct interpretation which exists outside of individual researchers, Strauss and Corbin allow for variations of interpretations according to the characteristics of the researchers.

As Parry (1998) suggests, there are three key philosophical approaches to grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978, 1992) versions of the grounded theory methodology can be branded as the *full-grounded theory* or *Glaserian approach*. Strauss and Corbin (1990) is categorised as *partial grounded theory* (Parry, 1998), or as Glaser (1992) suggests: the *full conceptual description* or the *Straussian procedure*. The constructivist approach as advocated by Charmaz (2006).

So far, the method has been adapted with a number of revisions by its creators, their students and by scholars in other disciplines to research of a variety of phenomena (Birks and Mills, 2015; Locke, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1994). Literature highlighted "an unprecedented growth" in the use of grounded theory method over recent times (Eaves, 2001, p.654), with "probably as many versions of grounded theory as there were grounded theorists" (Dey, 1999, p.2). Figure 15 presented the development of grounded theory (Birks and Mills, 2015)

Year	
1967	• **Glaser and Strauss:** *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*
1978	• **Glasser:** *Theoretical Sensitivity*
1987	• **Strauss**: *Qualitative Analysis tor Social Scientists*
1990	• **Strauss and Corbin**: *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*
1992	• **Glaser:** *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*
1994	• **Strauss and Corbin:** 'Grounded theory methodology: An overview', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1st Edition)
1995	• **Charmaz**: 'Grounded theory', in *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*
1998	• **Strauss and Corbin:** *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (2nd Edition)
2000	• **Charmaz:** 'Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd Edition)
2005	• **Clarke:** *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*
2015	• **Charmaz:** *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis* (2nd Edition)

Figure 15: The development of grounded theory

(Source: adapted from Birks and Mills, 2015)

The divergence of grounded theory has raised arguments among scholars and practitioners in relation to its validity. Some authors (e.g Joannides and Berland, 2008; Morse et al., 2016) argued that it is not necessary that grounded theory has to be conducted exactly the same way among researchers. Every single researcher stands in need of adapting the method to fit specific purposes of their research study, and they will create their own version of grounded theory approach. And this diversity is completely consistent with the spirit of grounded theory.

Contrary to these arguments, there are concerns that overuse of the term grounded theory in literature and presenting Grounded Theory in any other way than it was originated might place its credibility at risk (Dey, 1999; Wilson and Hutchinson 1996; Stern, 1994). Subbdaby (2006, p.633) when discussed over the topic "what grounded theory is not" has clarified numerous situations where researchers, without having actually used grounded theory, hold some "serious misconceptions" about the research approach.

Kools et al. (1996) argue, since there has been no agreement, between grounded theorists, over the preferred method for providing the best interpretation of social phenomenon, it is possible for researchers to use one of the grounded theory approaches, according to their preferences. However, for a study to be called grounded research, primary features of grounded theory must be adopted, and theories should be generated (Holloway and Wheeler, 1996).

The generation of theory occurs during actual research and is based on constantly comparing reflexively collected data and analysis. This is also one of the key features of grounded theory and will provide valuable insights if used correctly (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Morse and Field, 1995; Strauss and Corbin, 1994, Suddaby, 2006).

As Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.56) explain, "... we do not create data, we create theory out of data... do it correctly, then we are not speaking for our participants, but rather enabling (participants) to speak in voices that are clearly understood and representative". The

primary purpose of grounded theory is to produce models of human behaviour that are grounded in data (Morse and Field, 1995). The data for a grounded theory may come from "anything that might shed light on questions under study", for example interviews, observations or government documents, newspapers, and letters (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

The procedures of grounded theory are designed to enable a researcher to find patterns and relationships between patterns (Glaser 1978, 1992, cited in Morse and Field, 1995), and produce a good theory of substance that meets the criteria for "good" science (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.31).

3.5.2 Grounded theory as a rational choice of research methodology

As "one of the most popular research designs in the world" (Birks and Mills, 2015, p.1), however grounded theory is not always adequate to every research problem. Moghaddam (2006) asserts that, to consider grounded theory, researchers must assess whether it suits the studied area and if it can support and clarify the research subject.

As Suddaby asserts, grounded theory is a research method that is more suitable for some questions than others. It is more appropriate "when you want to make knowledge claims about how individuals interpret reality" (2006, p.634). It is tailored toward attempts to understand how a study's participants build meaning out of experience. The scholar further takes Isabella's (1990) study on managers' interpretation of processes of organisational change, "Evolving Interpretations as a Change Unfolds: How Managers Construe Key Organizational Events", as an excellent example of grounded theory approach. Locke (2001) agreed with this view and noted that the study of managerial behaviour is particularly suited to grounded theory as it provides a comprehensive explanation of the complexity of the organisation's management process.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the preferences of the researcher and the nature of the study contributes to the selection of a research method. Given the nature of this study, the researcher holds a view that grounded theory is the best approach for this dissertation. The grounded theory approach was selected as research method for this DBA study based on the ground that the aim the present research of was to seeks answers for the question, "What makes for the successful management of a global virtual team in the London FinTech industry?", is logically consistent with the characteristics of grounded theory.

Straussian approach is chosen as it is more suitable to characteristics of the present study. The Straussian methodology lets respondents have their own voice (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and offers some flexibility in approach and more pragmatic, allowing the researcher to have some preconceived ideas about the research undertaking. Procedurally, Glaser's insistence on no "preconceived" idea about the research subject is in contrast to the researcher's motivation, experience and interest in this field of study, and argued by Charmaz and Strauss as impractical and impossible (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Charmaz (2000, p.512) wrote: "the abstract terms and dense writing Glaser employed rendered the book inaccessible to many readers", Glaser's insights are not easily implemented, particularly in global cross-cultural contexts. It should be noted that, however, that regardless of their own philosophical perspectives, these authors hold a similar point of view with respect to constant comparison and categorising, the main processes used to produce grounded theory (Moghaddam, 2006).

3.5.3 Review of literature: some indicative studies concerning grounded theory methodology and global virtual teams management

As Shah and Corley (2006, p.1827) argued that, grounded theory does not mean that researchers can ignore the literature. Therefore, an illustration on popularity of studies concerning grounded theory methodology and global virtual teams in the Fintech industry

is presented in Table 6 below. In all cases the search was limited to academic journals classified as "business" over the last 20 years, from 2001 to 2021.

Searched keywords	Results
London or UK or United Kingdom and "FinTech" and "global virtual teams"	0
"FinTech" and "global virtual teams"	2
"Grounded theory" and "FinTech" and "global virtual teams"	0
"Glaser and Strauss" or "Corbin and Strauss", and "FinTech", and "Global Virtual Teams"	0
"Grounded theory" and "FinTech"	242
"Grounded theory" and "Global virtual teams"	162
"Glaser and Strauss" or "Corbin and Strauss" and FinTech	11
"Glaser and Strauss" or "Corbin and Strauss" and "global virtual teams"	11

Table 6: An overview of studies concerning global virtual teams in the Fintech industry using grounded theory methodology

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

A search was sought from the University "Summon" using a combination of key words as "grounded theory" and "FinTech" and "global virtual teams" returned zero results over the period of twenty years. Similarly, a database search that made reference to grounded theory by citing "Glaser and Strauss" or "Corbin and Strauss" in the text, and "FinTech" in the title returned zero results.

An extra search showed that within two years, the number of research in FinTech that using Grounded Theory increased 8.3 times, from 29 studies over the period 1999-2009 to 242 studies for the period 2001-2021. This suggests an increasing interest of practitioners and scholars in the FinTech industry as well as the use of Grounded theory. However, the attention for global virtual teams in FinTech still stays extremely low.

The use of key words "fintech" and "global virtual teams" for the period 2001-2021 returned two results. The first result is "Investor intention in equity crowdfunding. Does trust matter?" (Alharbey and Van Hemmen, 2021), which is unlikely to be relevant to the present research topic. For the second result, "Antecedents and consequence of job satisfaction" (Abbas, Ishaq, and Ullah, 2018), while the context was FinTech in Pakistan,

the research completely had nothing to do with virtual teams nor global virtual teams. The only one time the keyword "virtual" appear in the research was at the references.

Last but not least, the search result for a set of key words including "London" or "UK" or "United Kingdom" and "FinTech" and "global virtual teams" returned 0 results.

All together, these search results confirm the paucity of contemporary literature and the apparent literature gaps found concerning in the earlier chapter. Moreover, as Zavolokina, Dolata and Schwabe (2016) argued, while there is a vast number of research in the field of finance, not many studies attempt to shed the light on FinTech industry. In addition, reviewed literature indicates that virtual team research is still "maturing" rather than "matured" (p.663). There has been still little research on managing global virtual teams in FinTech, least of all using grounded theory. The present study aims to contribute towards filling the gap and provide useful insights into the research topic.

As the search results confirmed, this research work is the first effort in the United Kingdom towards global virtual team management in the FinTech industry. The findings of this study can be useful to Human Resources policy makers, virtual managers as well as academic institutions and researchers. Especially in the context of post-Covid-19 pandemic when many co-located teams now go virtual, this particular study may even find a wider population of readers.

3.6 Data collection

3.6.1 In-depth interviews

As Bogdan and Biklen (2006) suggested, data can be collected from interviews, participant observations or other research sessions. Qualitative interviews provide a precious opportunity for the researcher to gain individual viewpoints of other people, "to learn about what you cannot see and to explore alternative explanations of what you do see is the

special strength of interviewing in qualitative inquiry" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p.65). As a result, a significant amount of data can be collected through the interview process. Researchers should keep collecting data until reaching the point of data saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Given the complexity of this phenomenon as well as the lack of past research in global virtual teams in the FinTech industry, the researcher adopted in-depth interview as this method allows researcher to seek understanding and interpretation. In-depth interviewing fist grounded theory methods particularly well. It involves not only asking questions but systematically recording and documenting the response to probe for deeper meaning and understanding. (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2011).

As the research was carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic, most of the interviews were done virtually. While this method has all the disadvantages of virtual meetings such as technology breakdown, background noise, it also helped the participants mirror and recall their experiences of working with virtual teams, for example:

> **Interviewee:** "one thing otherwise at you is you end up having people-- *sorry if I can just hear my kid screaming in the background.* If you end up having people working really-- like apps, they like to work either really late or really early" (I3)
> **Interviewee:** "…. Oh, have I lost you? You still there?"
> **Interviewer**: "Yeah. I can still hear you, but I cannot see you."
> **Interviewee**: "Okay. It looks like someone's trying to phone me." (I9)
> **Interviewee:** "Say it again, sorry, you just broke in and out." (I6)

Following grounded theory approach, the questions for interviews were developed based on information given in previous interviews. No two interviews were the same; interview 1 fed in to interview 2 and so on. This process not only helped the researcher to ask the right questions but also provided the opportunity for further questions to be emerged and discussed. The interview extracts below may help to illustrate this:

> **Interviewer:** I remember one of my interviewees said that not only the managers need to trust the team member, but also, the global virtual team members need to trust that the manager is doing the right thing. So, what do you think about that? (I3)
> **Interviewer:** "one of my interviewees, he said that in America they work for 24 hours, then the company can call them anytime and they work, it's their life, for

example, but in London we are different, you have to confirm with the employee first, and then have to pay extra for the, [Unintelligible 00:18:15] So, do you experience any difference in work style? (I4)

The researcher used comments from previous interviews to encourage interviewees to think in a more thorough way. This was to ensure they voiced ideas they had simply forgotten, or not considered previously, or to encourage them to take a different perspective. By this way the researcher could investigate further into information that could easily be skipped otherwise. A conversation in the interview number 6 can illustrate the effect of this action:

> **Interviewer:** Do you have a situation where you have staff in-- for example, Romania, but then the people in that office keep asking your team member to do things?
> **Interviewee:** No.
> **Interviewer:** No? but it happened to some of my interviewees.
> **Interviewee:** Oh, really?
> **Interviewer:** Yes, so, he wants to-- he told me that he wants to visit the team to make sure that...
> **Interviewee:** They're not working on other stuff?
> **Interviewer:** Yes, because sometimes they're too polite or the people are asking them to do things are more senior to them, so, they are a bit...
> **Interviewee:** *Actually no*, *I take that back*, so, Romanian, no, but Sri Lanka, yes. That has happened in Sri Lanka, yes, you're right, where there have been local managers who were senior, who were asking them to do that, no, you're right actually, that's true, and that's very frustrating when that happens, and you have to go and speak to those other managers. And if they do have that requirement, then you get it formalized. No, that has happened actually. (I6)

In summary, by using in-depth interviews and follow grounded theory approach, the researcher had a greater opportunity to find out further aspects that otherwise may remain unspoken, undiscovered and make the research more valuable, truly appreciate the voice of people with lived experiences.

The interviews evolved as the researcher re-shaped them to be based upon the larger concerns touched on by previous respondents. Hence there is a maturation effect to the interviews as the interviews and the content evolve and emerge.

3.6.2 Observation

Kvale and Brickmann (2008) suggested, in the grounded theory approach, the researcher attempts to analyse the data to generate or build a theoretical interpretation based on observation. Participant observation plays a crucial role in qualitative research and described as a process where researchers can observe a setting and entirely taking part in the setting to collect data (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992).

The primary purpose for participant observation is to gain a deep understanding of the research setting and the interviewees. Participant observation is usually run concurrently with interviewing to collect data in the own words of the participant (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006).

As the Covid-19 lockdown occurred during the time the present study carried out, there were only two interviewed were done in person, the rest was done by video calls over Zoom, an online meeting platform. In both situations, face-to-face interviews and virtual interviews, the researcher attempted to observe the participants and note down their reactions to gain a thorough understanding about how they felt about each subject. For example:

> **Interviewee:** "But then one of my team says, "how is everything, are you okay?" then I just go "yes" (…*stressed his voice…)* but they can see I am really tense, or I end up angry" (I1)
> **Interviewee:** "…in different seasons a lot of heavy rain they will just be this huge kind of like [*makes whooshing sound*] yeah that's it all of a sudden and then some colleagues here on the phone if then on mute you can just hear all of these sounds like they're in the rain forest…" (I5)

In addition, the interactive nature of interviewing is often mentioned as standard practice in grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This aspect can be seen through these interview extracts:

> **Interviewee**: "Oh, I don't know actually. Well, it's interesting, cos managing a virtual team gives you a certain amount of distance… (laughs loudly) … which could be seen as a good and bad thing. (…) So, one is a good thing because it means that you have more time and space to think about your decision or to be a bit more… to calm down when something really annoys you … (laugh loudly)" (I1)

Interviewee: "And so I guess to keep bringing up just sounds like you want a jolly off to a location, even … basically, I've been to New York before, and from what I've heard Singapore is basically Canary Wharf, only with hot weather (laughs). So, you know, if we have offices in Vegas or Gran Canaria, yeah…(smile)…. Yeah" (I1)

3.6.3 The 10 interviews

To gain a deep understanding about the virtual team management activities in specific industrial contexts, the best interviewees are undoubtedly virtual managers working in that industry. Therefore, 10 global virtual team managers working in the London FinTech industry were approached via networks and invited for participation.

For this research, quality of answers is critical. This meant the researcher needed to find global managers with enough experience and maturity to allow them to discuss the challenges of managing virtual teams and their attempts to address those challenges. In all cases, the research participants started their careers as individual contributors, then moved into managing local teams, then global teams. While this level of experience means each participant had gained enough knowledge to discuss virtual management at length, especially if comparing to co-located team management, it takes time to acquire and reduces the available sample-size of participants. However, the researcher is confident the quality of answers was high, and enough time was spent with each participant to properly flesh-out the challenges each participant faced with their virtual team.

It should also be noted that nine out of ten participants are male, only one participant is female. This reflects the massive gender imbalance in the London FinTech industry.

Participation information sheets were sent via email and interviewees were asked to read and sign the consent form. It was stated clearly that the participation is voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity was guaranteed. Any identifying information was coded in the transcripts. For instance, the term I1, I2 were used instead of the real name of the participants, and anytime the real name of an individual or company was mentioned, it was edited as [name] or [company name] in the transcripts.

With participants have up to 17 years of experience in managing global virtual teams, the reliability of the investigation is greatly enhanced, as literature shows that theory building in global virtual management has centred on temporary teams with most studies use student teams (Powell, Piccoli, and Ives, 2004; Saunders and Ahuja, 2006).

In total, there are 579.6 minutes of interviews. A summary of the ten interviews is presented as below:

Interview Number	Date and time	Duration Type of interview	Position	Age/ Gender	Global virtual management experience	Type and size of business	Team description
I1	1 May 2019	01:21:82 Face-to-face interview	Head of Engineering Support	40 Male	10 years	Enterprise Software Development (400 people)	10 people (based in London, Singapore, and New York)
I2	20 November 2019	00:45:87 Face-to-face interview	Head of Technical Operations	40-50 Male	15 years	Enterprise Software Development (400 people)	15 people (based in London, Singapore and New York)
I3	28 May 2020	01:12:58 Video call	Managing Director	30-40 Male	10 years	consultancy across sectors. (560,000 people)	210 people (based in London, Latvia, New Mexico, Guadalajara, Philippines and two locations in India)
I4	2 June 2020	01:12:16 Video call	Head of UNIX	40-50 Male	12 years	Financial market infrastructure (4,000-5000 people)	50 people (based in London, Sri Lanka, US and Europe)
I5	12 June 2020	00:53:36 Video call	Application Engineering Lead	30-40 Male	6 months	Financial market infrastructure (4,000-5000 people)	12 people (based in London, Sri Lanka, Romania, Italy and Russia)
I6	18 June 2020	00:56:01 Video call	Head of Capital Markets Support Services	50-60 Male	10 years	Financial market infrastructure (4,000-5000 people)	80 people (based in Sri Lanka, Romania, Milan, London and Fort Mill (US)

I7	21 July 2020	37:46 Video call	Business Owner, Chief Executive Officer	30-40 Male	3 years	Software development and IT infrastructure consultant (10 people)	18 people (Scotland, Midlands, South East, Ukraine)
I8	4 August 2020	50:46 Video call	Senior IT Manager	40-50 Male	6 years	Financial market infrastructure (4,000-5000 people)	9 people (based in West America, East America, London, Austria)
I9	13 August 2020	50:58	Release Manager	40-50 Male	17 years	Financial market infrastructure (4,000-5000 people)	200 people (based in Oslo (Norway), Fort Mill (US), Sri Lanka, Russia, China, different locations in Italy and England
I10	11 September 2020	00:59:30	Marketing Manager EMEA	40-50 Female	4 years	Technology (over 8000 people)	40 people (based in Europe, Middle East and Africa)

Table 7: Summary of the ten interviews

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

3.7 Data analysis

3.7.1 An overview of open, axial and selective coding

The coding process lies at the heart of grounded theory (Babchuk, 1997). It is the fundamental analytic process conducted by the researcher, and consists of three basic phases: open, axial and selective (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Firstly, as Goulding (1999) suggest, the coding process can be thought of as hierarchy, with open coding at the bottom layer. Strauss and Corbin (1990, 2008) describe open coding as the first stage in analytic process that related to breaking the data down into separate parts, closely examining, comparing, making comparison for similarities and differences related to the data obtained, and asking questions about the phenomena as reflected in data. Through this procedure, researchers are able to reach the goals of conceptualising and categorising data.

Secondly, after completing the open coding, the researcher can implement selective coding and axial coding (Khandkar, 2009). This is the process of reducing the number of codes and organising them such that the connections can be displayed between them. This will result in developing research categories, described by Goulding (1999, p.13) as "unit[ing] the concepts and reveal[ing] a gestaltian theoretical explanation of the phenomenon under study".

Axial coding answers questions such as 'when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences" (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p.125). Axial coding is described as the process of relating categories to their sub-categories and linking a category at the level of properties and dimensions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.123). Axial coding is the appreciation of concepts in terms of their dynamic interrelationships. The focus of this phase is to establish a model that describes the particular conditions in which a phenomenon occurs. These form the base allowing the theory to be created (Goulding, 1999; Brown, Stevens, Troiano and Schneider, 2002).

Finally, Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.116) describe selective coding as "the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development". Through this process, categories related to the core category are integrated and ultimately become the basis for the grounded theory (Babchuk, 1997). Once coding has reached this stage, no new dimensions, properties or relationships should emerge. Coding is at theoretical saturation (Brown et al., 2002).

3.7.2 Strategies for Data Analysis of the present research

As described in the section of "in-depth interviews", the analysis was done after each interview while it was still fresh in the researcher's memory from the tape recording, field notes and memos, and then additional findings fed into the next interview. This process was conducted until the research reach the saturation point.

In this research, the interviews were transcribed in verbatim in separate file of Microsoft Office Word 2011. Each line of the transcripts was read with utmost attention and keeping in mind the main research question. Grounded theory approach suggests that each important chunk of respondent's statements should be assigned a title, referred to as open code. Following the guideline of Strauss and Corbin (2004) for using grounded theory approach of data analysis, the statements of the respondents were broken down into discrete parts and each part was assigned a label, or in other words, a code. The purpose of breaking up data and labelling the discrete sets with codes was to identify the similar instances in the data. These instances were in the form of the opinion, experiences, observation, and feelings of respondents about virtual teams. This process helped in avoiding preconceived biases and hence findings the answers to the research questions that are grounded in the data. The codes were either descriptive codes or In vivo codes. As defined by Saldana (2015), descriptive codes are the one where researcher assigns labels in

her own words that could best describe the statement of the respondent. Whereas In vivo codes are those where researcher use the word to label (code) the statement from the statement itself. For example, in this research the open code "follow the sun" was extracted from statements of interviewees, as it is a term widely used in FinTech, whereas most available research in virtual working will refer to this as the 24/7 office.

The process of open coding was performed manually on Microsoft Word. While reading the statements, important statements were selected and tagged with label (code) by using the 'comment' function of Microsoft Word. The open codes were also colour coded, assigning unique colour to the codes which were related to the respective research question.

- Research question 1: What are business drivers for global virtual management?

- Research question 2: What is different about managing a global virtual team?

- Research question 3: What are the key issues and challenges that managers in the London FinTech industry faced with when managing global virtual teams?

- Research question 4: What are the competencies that managers need to be effective in the virtual world?

- Research question 5: How can a practical framework regarding global virtual team management practices be recommended to enhance virtual team performance?

Figure 16: Assigning colours to the research questions

(Source: Research's own work, 2021)

This method makes the codes more visible and create convenience for the analysis process.

Figure 17: An example of how open codes were coloured

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

Relevant open codes were grouped together into relevant categories, and each category was assigned a label, referred to as axial codes. These axial codes, therefore, represent the bundle of relevant open codes that were grouped together based on their common scope. The process of axial codes formation was also iterative, as suitability and pertinence of initially devised themes were re-assed by the researcher and codes were revised.

Finally, in order to generate theme, relevant axial codes were further combined together, as themes, and assigned new code names, referred to as selective codes. Selective coding was the third and last step of analysis grounded theory, where central ideas that underpins the commonality of the different categories made in axial coding stage were identified. The process is aligned with Saldana's (2015) data condensation logic, whereby large qualitative data is reduced to comprehensive yet parsimonious comprehendible themes.

3.7.3 Theoretical saturation

As Goulding (1999) suggested, a theory is only seen as valid if data saturation has been reached. This occurs when the researcher no longer obtains new information from subsequent data and "makes the subjective determination that new data will not provide any new information or insights for the developing categories" (Creswell, 2002, p.450).

In this grounded theory research, the researcher engaged in a process of constant comparative procedure (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 2002), which involved gathering data, classifying it into categories, collecting further information, and constantly comparing the new concepts with merging categories. Over ten rounds of coding have been conducted. As a result, codes were reduced and grouped into meaningful categories as Goulding (1999) suggested. During this level of coding, theoretical saturation was reached.

3.8 Summary

The aim of the research is significantly crucial; it helps to define the areas of focus. The aim the present research of was to seeks answers for the question: "What makes for the successful management of a global virtual team in the London FinTech industry?". Grounded theory is especially suitable to the research work as it can help to build knowledge based on individual interpretation about the complex reality of managing global virtual teams.

As Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested, the selection of any research method is dependant on the nature of the research question and the researcher's preferences. The researcher conducted ten in-depth interviews with global virtual managers in the London FinTech industry. With up to 17 years of experiences in managing global virtual teams, these participants helped to reveal the reality behind the closed door of virtual working, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 4:

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: RESEARCH QUESTION ONE AND TWO

This chapter provides answers for research question One and Two with key findings about business drivers and differences in managing a global virtual team. A further discussion about cost-saving is also presented to touch on the question: are virtual teams really a cost-saving?, an issue that is barely touched in literature.

4.1 Business drivers for global virtual management

Most of the interviewees highlighted factors such as follow-the-sun, access to global talent pool, enhanced global presence and cost-saving as the key business drivers for global virtual management. The following comment summarises this:

> "…definitely these three: follow-the-sun support that kind of things are enabling the 24-hour coverage of services, cost savings clearly, and finding talent that's not otherwise available." (I4)

This resonates with the literature review mentioned in Chapter 2 (Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Cissé and Wyrick, 2010; Algesheimer et al., 2011; Gressgard, 2011; Chamakiotis, Dekoninck, and Panteli, 2013). It should be noted that while most available research focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of virtual team in general, the present research focuses solely on the business drivers for global virtual management in the London FinTech industry with a specified focus on the business aspect. Consequently, advantages related to individual and societal level have not been discussed. Instead, the participants contributed comprehensive insights into operational drivers, financial drivers and contextual drivers.

4.1.1 Operational drivers

Follow the sun

The FinTech industry provides products and services based on many Financial Markets across many time zones. Teams who operate and support such products and services must be able to keep up.

> "as opposed to getting people to work shifts that are out of hours, actually using a follow the sun model" (I3)

Follow-the-sun means a team can operate for 24-hours.

> "it's around having the follow-the-sun model. So, by having people in America and Sri Lanka and London, it allows me to have members awake, online, working for a near sort of 24-hour" (I4)

A follow-the-sun model improves employee work/life balance without sacrificing company goals. There is reduced requirement for late-working and no requirement for shift-patterns because work scheduled beyond a location's online day can be handed to the next location for action.

Access to global talent pool

Organisations using virtual working methods can gain access to a wider pool of talent outside of their geographic region.

> "it gives you the ability and flexibility to have access to the best talent. So, you are not limited to the… let's say, territorial boundaries" (I10)

Virtual work opens a diverse pool of talent, from cheaper, lower skilled resources to highly competitive roles that are not available locally.

> "when we hire in Bucharest, in Romania, in Europe, we're able to hire really good technical resources that in certain technologies aren't available, for example, in London." (I4)

The wider access to a global talent pool means that global virtual managers have flexibility to look at different locations and retain talent that suits the required function. If a certain part of the world has a ready-made talent pool of people with a certain type of required skill, a global virtual manager is free to recruit there. It should be noted that finding the

best skill and the best talent remains the key driver for using global virtual teams, according to the research participants.

Virtual work also allows organisations to recruit people that do not want to re-locate.

> "we were tapping into people that physically would not want to move to London, but they were happy to join the team because they knew they could work remotely." (I8)

Enhance global presence in diversified geographic locations

When team members are available globally and at any time, all customers can expect the same standard of support no matter where they're based.

> "that really helps with improving the availability of-- and the quality of support that we can give to those company" (I4)

Team members can be assigned to certain geographies no matter where they are based. If there is sudden demand for a particular expertise in one region, a virtual team member can be quickly assigned without relocation expenses or the time and cost of recruiting locally.

> "it makes the offering for that part of the region a stronger offering (I2)
> "it got to the point where it's like, you know, some customers are turning around to us and asking why you haven't got anyone here?" (I2)

Reduce external environment-related risks

Redundancy can also be an important factor when considering virtual teams. In the event of a major incident in some parts of the world, there are team members in other, safe locations who can take over.

> "we want to have people not in one location, just in case something happens within that location (…) we spread the risk. "(I6)

Modern technology such as Cloud and high-speed networking also means teams do not have to be based in the same location as the technology they are supporting or operating. Multiple redundant sites can be built, each one ready to take over from the other in the event of disaster operated from a safe location anywhere in the world.

> "in Sri Lanka there's a primary site and a secondary site. So, if the primary site has a problem, they could go to the secondary site for example, and then if the whole of Sri Lanka goes down, we still got London, we've also got Romania, we've also got America" (I6)

Firms under financial regulation are often expected to prove that they have sufficient business continuity programs. Virtual teams, with team members based in entirely different geographies, have this concept baked in.

> "it's kind of pushed forward by the FCA [Financial Conduct Authority], but there's a large kind of resiliency push that's the current buzzword (…) so, the fact that you've got your staff in different geographical location has given you that kind of comfort factor (…) you go back to last year or maybe 2018, I heard there was these fire in California, which took out a lot of the kind of American infrastructure. If you've got resources in different places around the world, then you've got cover." (I9)

In summary, it can be stated:

Finding 1: **Follow the sun, access to global talent pool, enhance global presence and reduce external environment-related risks are seen as primary operational drivers for global virtual management**

While the first three factors are widely considered as key business drivers of global virtual team in past studies (Solomon, 2001; Maynard, 2006; D'Souza and Colarell, 2010; Singh, 2013; Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton, 2017), it is difficult to find any research discussing these issues in such a detailed and vibrant way. In addition, reducing external environment-related risks are surprisingly less recognised in the literature. This may be due to the fact that most research are based on temporal student teams (e.g. Jarvenpaa et al.,1998; Zhang et al., 2009; Iorio and Taylor; 2015). With lived experiences, the participants of the present research provided a more realistic view. Issues related to external environment risk will be discussed further in the section of key issues and challenges.

4.1.2 Contextual drivers

COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in huge numbers of employees being forced to work from home for an extended period. As participants discussed below, this may have begun an irreversible change to the way teams work.

"with things like COVID-19, how all of a sudden, everyone becoming virtual, whether that swings back more towards global workers or not" (I3)

Finding 2:   Covid-19 pandemic is considered as a contextual driver for virtual working.

This viewpoint is in accordance with a recent study of teleworking in the context of the Covid-19 crisis conducted by Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés (2020). The authors commented that global attacks, environment issues or new illness can be considered as drivers for virtual working.

4.1.3 Financial drivers

Productivity

During the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic with most employees working from home, there have been reports of an increase in productivity.

"particularly with Corona that's happened recently, there's a very big organisation saying that they've had a huge increase in productivity" (I8)

Virtual teams that work remotely provide flexibility around their family life which results in happier employees which, in turn, increases morale and productivity. They spend more time at home because there isn't a lengthy commute or days and nights away in a different location.

"There are also a lot of cases where there's going to be better morale within the team, so if you've got people for example, that have families to bring up, et cetera, you can be a lot more flexible around that. So, you can end up with the same people being more productive because they're just happier (…) Their days are shorter because they're not commuting so much" (I8)

However, one manager interviewed pointed out that benefits to virtual teams only really arise when they are implemented for a specific reason, such as a 24-hour operation. The reason(s) for the virtual team must be big enough to out-weigh the benefits of a co-located team which is generally preferable.

> "there could be a performance gain if, for example, you're on a development project and maybe if you were doing a 24 seven or follow-the-sun model (…) so, depending on, yeah, depending on the definition of performance, I guess if you want to get something done quickly and you can kind of daisy-chain that support model (…) Is that better than having twice as many people working a nine to five in London?" (I9)

Virtual teams with a diverse set of members from different backgrounds and cultures can also help foster innovation and creativity. This view corresponds well with Batarseh et al. (2017) assertion that the diversity of knowledge can create a bundle of potentially valuable resources for the team.

> "it's really fun working with a global team, because actually it's really nice working with people with different viewpoints, and different understanding" (I3)

Cost saving

Technical skills can come at a premium, but in some parts of the world skills in some technologies will be less expensive than others. Virtual teams allow recruitment to take place in the most cost-effective locations without having to accept lower skill levels. A global virtual team allows managers to get more value from employees by hiring in locations where skills in required technologies are cheaper.

> "some virtual teams can be a cost saving because you've been able to tap into labour markets that are cheaper than your own locally." (I8)

London, for example, is expensive to recruit for, so it is advantageous to be able to reach out to different parts of the world and find the same skills, but more cost-effective.

> "Historically, teams in different locations have been cheaper than in London. And so, we've got teams all over the world in Sri-Lanka, Russia, Italy, America, et cetera." (I9)

In addition, by hiring people in other parts of the world and implementing follow-the-sun (as above), companies do not have to pay overtime for people in London.

> "people aren't having to work overtime, they're just picking up those duties that have to be done at a different time as part of all normal working days." (I6)

Virtual work means organisations pay less for travel expenses.

> "so there's a cost saving where you don't have to pay for their train tickets et cetera." (I8)

There are also many savings that business can make from office-related costs by running virtual teams.

> "I think that was the cost reduction as well as if you don't have to pay for office space" (I10)
> "you've also got things like requiring less permanent office space so that can be a huge cost saving as well" (I8)

Cost-saving is often seen as a primary driver for business to run virtual teams. However, it is difficult to find literature providing clear numbers around costs and exactly how much can be saved. This could be because it is difficult to get a general measure of cost saving, as a manager states, below:

> "the cost savings are going to be very different depending on the organisation." (I8)

To shed light on the cost-saving issue, some respondents provided an estimate of the cost of remote employee:

> "remote teams tend to cost around 20 per cent of local staff (…) We also typically find that remote teams don't give 100 per cent efficiency compared to co-located staff." (I3)
> "the cost to the company to hire an IT resource in the Sri Lanka market was £10k per year compared to £60k in London. With a team of circa 200 in Sri Lanka this produced an annual cost saving of £10m." (I4)
> "it's clearly cheaper - I don't have visibility of a lot of salary information but I would expect somewhere in the region of about 50-70 per cent." (I5)

Despite these valuable insights that are hardly found in literature, it should be noted that there are more factors on which to base a cost comparison, which will be presented in the next section of further discussion about cost saving.

In addition, although the potential for cost saving is often cited as a key factor for organisations embarking on virtual teams (Casey, 2010), most respondents reported that the top business drivers are to enable a 'follow-the-sun' working model or 24/7 office, and access to global talent pool, with cost saving secondary to these elements.

> "Actually, my company doesn't save money - our offices are in three of the most expensive locations in the (…) We run virtual teams world-wide because we need a 24/7 response to customers" (I1)
> "cost wasn't the reason that the team was remote (more due to locality of uniquely skilled resources)" (I8)

Finding 3: **Cost-saving and productivity seem to be primary financial drivers for global virtual management**

Finding 4: **In general, most virtual managers reported that the top business drivers for the global teams are to enable a 'follow-the-sun' working model and access to global talent pool. Cost-saving is secondary to these factors.**

While finding 1 and finding 3 confirms what the current literature says (D'Souza and Colarell, 2010; Singh, 2013; Batarseh et al. 2017; Hinds, Neeley, and Cramton, 2017), finding 4 brings a new valuable insight and opens a path for future research. So far, virtual team as a cost-saving solution is a concept widely accepted but barely investigated in literature. Further discussion about cost-saving will be presented below to shed light on the question: are virtual teams really a cost-saving?

4.1.4 Further discussion about cost-saving as a business driver for global virtual teams

Some participants used words such as "perceived cost-saving", "illusion", "that's not always the drive" when discussing whether virtual teams can actually save costs. As discussed earlier, certain locations around the world can provide technical resources at much cheaper rates, but as some managers point out, these resources tend to be lower skilled. Initial savings can disappear in the long-term due to more employees needed and more work to oversee these teams. There are also additional costs that may not have been accounted for when setting up the remote team members.

> "it's much harder to lead a global team (…) looking at the cost-benefit analysis of doing it, I think often some of those data batches aren't taken into account with it, it is definitely a hard thing to do." (I3)

More employees needed

Hiring in other countries, in less skilled locations, may mean hiring more people to do the same job. Such locations may not use modern working methods or technology and they may still take manual approaches to tasks. This can call any cost savings into question.

> "I would question the true cost saving as offshore teams are a lot larger than historical local teams and seem to perform repeating / manual tasks rather than focusing on automation and efficiency." (I5)

Quality of employees and their work can also be questionable when hiring in cheaper locations.

> "especially in India, I think is challenging sometimes, (…) you'll have your team of 10 that you'll work with, you'll get one or two people who are extraordinarily good and there's a number of people who really aren't very good at all." (I3)

Finding 5: **It is suggested that human resources in some locations tend to be lower skilled and initial savings can disappear in the long-term due to the extra work required to oversee these teams.**

Finding 6: **It is suggested that hiring in less skilled locations may mean hiring more people to do the same job.**

Need people to guide remote workers

Overseeing remote workers, especially those hired in cheaper locations, can mean more management needed to monitor quality of the work being performed.

> "there's still a perception that you need a couple of people in London to guide a large number of people in Sri Lanka (…) I think is it perceived cost-saving" (I5)

> "I think a lot of teams get fully or partially sort of offshored (…) to locations where staff are cheaper to hire, but then the companies don't look enough at the actively, the actual cost, the reality of the extra work that is created by having like a larger team of different or lower-skilled resources, then you need more and more people to do the same job and also, [monitor] the quality of work to get it done." (I4)

> "I suppose, really that the result of saving a lot of money meant they had to invest a bit more in managing, but I guess it was still worth it – I don't know." (I1)

Finding 7: **More management needed to monitor quality of the work being performed.**

Extra cost for travel, training and development

Although virtual teams are designed to work in separate geographic locations there may be a requirement for some team members to meet. This can result in inflated travel costs.

> "when we had to get people for a particular project to come locally, there were a lot of travel expenses, you know but that's necessary whether you have a virtual team, you always have to get people on site at some point." (I8)

In addition, managers who hire team members in cheaper locations may find they need to invest more in training to get them to the required skill level.

> "if you want a UNIX engineer or Windows engineer, you can find those people. And if you invest in them and spend time bringing them up to speed, I think they're comparable to a similar person in London to do that role. (I6)

Training remote team members in the firm's mission, processes and business drivers is also an extra requirement for team members who may not be that close to the firm's headquarters.

> "you do need people in London, close to the hub, close to understanding that business drivers, the priorities, who can then feed that back to the guys who are offshore." (I5)

Finding 8: **Firms use virtual working may find they need to invest more in travel, training and development for virtual team members**

Extra cost due to loss of quality

Some participants revealed that there is a loss of quality when hiring employees in lower skilled locations.

> "maybe there is some cost-saving but there is definitely loss of quality" (I5)
> "you could have an impact to productivity. And then you're going to end up with… not with a cost saving but actually with a cost" (I8)

As respondent discussed, due to cultural differences in being open to ask questions, his team had to deal with serious issue and ended up wasting two weeks. These issues will be further discussed later in this paper.

> "we ended up wasting two weeks, worth of two-man weeks because the individual just was too afraid to ask questions or ask for clarification or ask for help and assistance. And every time they were asked, it was no, everything's fine." (I7)

Finding 9: **It seems virtual teams have to face extra cost due to loss of quality when hiring employees in less skilled locations.**

Local employment law

Different countries have different employment laws, and this can mean the cost of hiring these teams is not limited to their salary. For instance, some countries mandate overtime payments after a certain amount of hours have been worked per week. A participant provided a very detailed explanation over this issue:

> "there's a couple of people in Romania who worked for me. So, you think, Oh, that'll be cheaper. But when you kind of start looking at the numbers and you see their rates and you see their employment laws and things, they've got around overtime, et cetera, sometimes it's an illusion really. So, if we talk about Romanian employment law if you do more than your quota of hours a week, then automatically you get double time for instance, now that's Romanian law. So, whilst on paper, you might be able to get a resource for, you know, 10, 20 grands cheaper in Romania than London. When you factor in the amount of overtime they might be doing, which is kind of considered normal in London, then the cost starts going up." (I9)

Finding 10: **Virtual managers revealed that the cost of hiring virtual teams is not limited to their salary. Local employment law such as overtime may make the cost go up.**

Finding 11: **Virtual managers raised questions of whether cost-saving in running virtual teams is just an illusion.**

Automation and the loss of cost benefit

A participant pointed out that the more prevalent automation becomes then the less requirement for manual work and the cost benefit for outsourcing manual work is lost.

> "I think the cost arbitrage-- it's interesting, I think the more that automation comes in, the less the cost arbitrage necessarily works." (I3)

If the only reason for the virtual team in the first place is cost benefit and that cost benefit is no longer being realised (e.g., through market forces, global events, technology changes or changes in ways of working), the virtual team could be disbanded until the cost benefit is realised again. This can be a continuous cycle.

"the whole thing moves in waves, so, I think it tends to go very much moving to a global virtual team, then you tend to get less of a cost advantage, you tend to swing back" (I3)

Finding 12:   **It is suggested that the more prevalent automation becomes then the less requirement for manual work and the cost benefit for outsourcing manual work is lost.**

To sum up, past research (e.g. Lipnack and Stamps, 1999; Berry, 2011b) mainly raved about cost-saving while additional costs and potential problematic issues are usually neglected. Findings in this section (Finding 5 to Finding 9) are barely mentioned in literature. Casey (2010), a rare attempt at examining this topic, shared the same view with the present study that the salary and infrastructure costs are not the only factors, "training, travel, productivity, and product quality costs need to be included" when calculating the true cost of implementing a virtual team (p.90).

While finding 10 and finding 11 wrapped up concerns of participants related to the cost of virtual team, it should be noted that local employment law and its effect on global virtual team has barely been mentioned in previous research. A search on Summon for these two key words "local employment law" and "global virtual teams" return 2 results only, and no result shown if the keyword "FinTech" added. This is an important field that future research should attempt to investigate.

Finally, finding 12 is supported by the statement of World Economic Forum, which asserted that economies solely dependent on labour arbitrage will see their source of economic growth erode, as technologies increasingly enable competitive production in higher-cost environments (Martin and Leurent, 2017). This provides particularly important implications for local governments in policy planning, and requires a bigger framework, encompassing research, technology innovation, education, labour and industrial investment attraction strategies that track external environment and technological development and allows the country to stay ahead of the game.

4.2 What is different about managing a global virtual team?

In general, most of participants shared the same view about how global virtual teams should be defined. Most comments related to team, geographically disperse and communicating through technology. For example,

> "I would say that's a distributed team working in different locations and communicating using teleconferencing, phone, etc. or chat. So, not co-located basically." (I6)

4.2.1 Standard management skills, magnified impacts

A virtual team is a team first, with added characteristics of virtualness (Martin et al., 2004):

> "it means you run a team and you have members of that team not just in one physical location" (I1)

> "it doesn't really matter whether they are, but if they still operate as one team and it's one unit" (I10)

Therefore, virtual management includes, but is not limited to, elements of traditional team management.

> "obviously, they're all the same management things apply" (I5)

> "just standard management skills, maybe (…) you need to be a bit more organized to make sure you are communicating. (…) [it's not] just about communication, it's about setting goals, vision, building that team, I don't think it's necessarily any different" (I6)

Answering the question whether there is anything he would do differently from managing traditional to co-located teams, a CEO of a young consultancy stated that:

> "I wouldn't say we do anything really different for an on perm or remote virtual engagement because we are all the same way, we all use the same tools, we use the same tooling ticket management into process management regardless of whether or not people are in the office "(I7)

However, it is noted that the impact of bad management will be much higher in a virtual team.

> "the consequences of bad management are much higher in a virtual team. So, there are places where you can be sloppy on the way that you lead a team in a local environment that you get away with, whereas in a virtual team, the team performance and your performance as a manager and you know, will be massively impacted if you don't run that team well." (I8)

Therefore,

> "focusing on all aspects of good management is important. (…) And as I said before, if you do a bad job of that, it's going to be magnified tenfold if you're remote" (I8)

Finding 13: **Virtual managers confirmed managing a virtual team requires standard management skills, but impact of bad management will be magnified.**

4.2.2 Managing geographically dispersed team members through various collaborative communication technologies

Members of virtual teams are commonly spread all over the world.

> "You have them spread throughout different physical locations. In my case I have team members based in London, Singapore and New York." (I1)

And hence, virtual team management requires the use of collaborative communication technologies:

> "I have to manage the team through software tools, like Slack, which is an internet app, email, video conferencing, things like that "(I1)
> "if you're imagining a local team for example, the instant messaging chat would be less important. (I8)

As virtual teams rely on tools and technologies to communicate and cooperate, participants shared concerns about technology breakdown and highlighted the importance of corporate investment in tools and technologies:

> "you're completely relying on tools and technologies for building the team and you're relying on the company giving you the tools and technologies to do that" (I5)
> "What if the office network goes down or the Wi-Fi goes down? I can't speak to them! Even our phones are IP so I'd have to use my mobile but, yeah, if the technology goes down, I can't talk to them" (I1)

4.2.3 Time zone differences

It is common that virtual team members are located in different time zones:

> "With a massive time-zone difference, four in East America with a large time difference but not too big, one person in London and myself in Austria" (I8)

Managing virtual teams involves complex challenges across time zones. In this study, virtual team members of the participants came from three to seven different time zones and countries. Issues such as setting up meetings for people located in different time zones, time management and work-life balance will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.4 Lack of face-to-face

Global virtual teams lack face to face contact from the first step of the employment cycle:

recruitment,

> "there's a number of different areas that are different between the local and the remote team. Most of them come from the lack of in-person face to face, day to day communication." (I4)
> "how do we interview overseas? We have to do it over Slack and stuff which makes it more difficult. That means the interviews aren't as personal." (I1)

and that happen in everyday activities:

> "A few of them have come to London so we met and worked with them but majority of the management of the team is done using information technology tools, basically. And so that's where the virtual comes from." (I1)

Finding 14: **Global virtual teams lack of face to face from the first step of the employment cycle and that happen in everyday activities.**

Finding 15: **Virtual teams rely on technology to communicate and cooperate.**

While these findings are not new, it confirms what the existing literature says (Casio, 2000; RW3 CultureWizard, 2018; Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020) that so far virtual teams rely on tools and technologies to communicate and collaborate. It also helps to open up the discussion about further issues such as technology breakdown, the use and effectiveness of common technical tools, which will be discussed in following sections.

4.2.5 More difficulties, more complexities, more workload

Most virtual managers reported that it is harder to lead a virtual team, with more complexities and more workload.

> "there's a lot more things that you need to bear in mind and there's a lot more complexities that go with it. So, I think it is definitely harder" (I3)
> "you have to implement a number of strategies and tools and systems to overcome, to fight against the problem of the difficulties that remote teams have." (I4)
> "I do think managing virtual teams is more workload for managers, because I think you need to put in an extra kind of effort" (I10)

Finding 16:   Overall, virtual managers find more difficulties, more complexities, more workload when managing a virtual team.

This finding is well covered in the literature (Warkentin et al., 1997; Chatfield et al., 2014; Dube and Pare, 2001; Dulebohn and Hoch, 2017; Maduka et al., 2018). For example, Sarker and Sahay (2003) asserted that due to the spatial, temporal separation and cultural difference along with the intensive mediation of information and communication technologies, virtual teams have their unique complexities. These complexities have significant implications on numerous issues, for instance, trust, communication, team building and collaboration. Given the specific issues associated with virtual teams, it appears logical to suggest that virtual teams differ from co-located teams in various ways.

As information and communication technology continue to evolve, so does virtual work. There is a need for examining the challenges virtual teams are faced with so organisations can improve co-operation and knowledge-sharing across different geographies (Hansen, Hope and Moehler, 2012). The following section will discuss key issues and challenges that managers in the London FinTech industry deal with.

4.3 Summary

This chapter described the business drivers for global virtual management. According to the study participants, there are a number of reasons for a global virtual team from providing 24 hour, follow-the-sun service to locating the cheapest resources with the highest skills. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the differences in managing virtual teams from 'traditional', co-located teams. Participants were generally of the view that management skills in a virtual team were not necessarily that different, but that a bad manager can have much more of a negative effect in a virtual team than a co-located team and this is something to beware of.

Chapter 5:

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: RESEARCH QUESTION THREE AND FOUR

5.1 Key issues and challenges in managing a global virtual team

This chapter discusses key issues and challenges in managing a global virtual team which

relates to research question Three. In addition, the competencies that managers need to be

effective in virtual settings are described as a response for the research question Four.

Before discussing key findings, it should be noted that participants raised an interesting

point that many FinTech firms tend to be dominated by global organisations. Virtual team

is a common form of work setting in this sector, and its members tend to have first-hand

experience of working in remote environment.

> "FinTech tends to be dominated by global organisations. So, people are used to
> collaborating with people outside of their team (…) people are used to some of those
> challenges of working with people in different time zones and different cultures."
> (I8)
> "both of them worked in previous places where their management was in different
> locations. So, they kind of experiencing that. Maybe they get used to it, so I wonder
> what a new person who never has that before." (I1)

To some extent, these factors have an effect on viewpoints of participants and the way they

interpret challenges and handle them. Compared to participants of many previous studies

(e.g. Jarvenpaa et al.,1998; Zhang et al., 2009; Iorio and Taylor; 2015) where participants

are students, this might make a significant difference.

5.1.1 Challenges in employment law and practices

As mentioned in the literature review, virtual teams also present greater complexity due to

the differences in laws, regulations and business processes (Maduka et al., 2018). The

following comments illustrate these challenges:

> "it's about employment laws as well. Romania (…) they can't do more than 35 hours
> a week overtime." (I9)
> "being called at 10 o'clock at night for work in New York is par for the course for
> lots of them. In London that's not really the case. You have to put specific people on
> call" (I1)

Further discussion in issues related to local employment law and practices such as training and recruitment will be presented later in this paper.

Finding 17: **In FinTech industry, virtual team members tend to have experience of collaborating with people based in different location, different time zones and different cultures.**

Finding 18: **Virtual teams encounter significant challenges in employment law and practices.**

5.1.2 Key issues and challenges in communication

Most participants mentioned communication as a key challenging issue.

> "I guess it all possibly boils down to communication." (I6)

Lack of the visual or auditory cues

Chatfield et al. (2014) suggested the virtual team environment leads to challenges that are more difficult to deal with because they are without the benefit of face-to-face interactions. For example, lack of visual cues (e.g. body movement, facial expression, emotion) might constrain understanding and means subtle emotional messages can be misread (Chawla and Krauss, 1994; Walther,1997; Workman et al., 2003). Respondents of the present research provide a detailed explanation for this type of communication challenge:

> "I don't want to spend my entire time using a chatting app or interacting virtually, I definitely prefer face-to-face" (I6)
> "The thing that you miss though when you're remote is, for example, if you've just given your boss a piece of work and they don't look happy, you might proactively say, oh sorry, you know, is there something wrong with us?" (I8)

This confirms the concept of team emotional authenticity, recently introduced by Connelly and Turel (2016) as "the extent to which members of a team communicate with each other without suppressing or amplifying their emotional expression". The authors also suggested that perceptions of emotional authenticity affect team trust, which in turn affects teamwork behaviours, which then improves team performance. A respondent shared:

"if I come in one morning and I am really angry as something happened over night and it should've not happened, or it went to the wrong people (..) one of my team says, "how is everything, are you okay?" then I just go "yes" (…stressed his voice…) but they can see I am really tense, or I end up angry" (I1)

Finding 19:   Lack of the visual or auditory cues negatively affects team emotional authenticity and team trust.

In addition, respondents reported that they find it harder to resolove issues without the benefits of face-to-face:

"it's a lot harder sometimes to get over a complex business problem to a remote team" (I3)
"some of the stuff we're doing is quite in-depth and I think that kind of stuff is much better to be face-to-face" (I5)
"wouldn't happen if we all sat in the same place because it should be a 30-second conversation" (I2)

Finding 20:   It takes longer to resolve business problem in virtual teams due to lack of face-to-face.

Communication overload

All statements analysed revealed that virtual team management involves excessive and formal communication. Virtual managers need to attend a great deal of meetings which requires a lot of planning:

"I have a daily call now with about 15 people that's too many people to have on a scrum call (…) This is why we're running over the time every single day." (I5)
"In co-located teams, people just need to turn around to discuss about something, whereas in virtual teams, to keep in touch and to just communicate with each other about things it's almost like it takes quite a lot of planning." (I5)

While in traditional teams, employees and managers attend approximately 3.2 meetings per week (Schell, 2010, cited in Kauffeld and Lehmann-Willenbrock, 2012), this number is much higher in virtual teams, as participants reported:

"9, 10 calls a day, that's what I usually have" (I10)
"I spend half a day on the phone with them anyway because we're all in meetings together." (I9)

Finding 21: Virtual team management involves excessive and formal communication.

Previous studies (e.g. Lee-Kelley and Sankey, 2007) also raised concerns about over-communication in global virtual teams, however, it should be noted that virtual managers find it is necessary to over-communicate:

> "you've got to more formally manage your communication, remember to do it, remember to set up sessions with one-to-one, to ensure that communication." (I6, p.18)
> "I think as soon as you start going to a global virtual team, you need to almost over-communicate" (I3, p.4-5)

Finding 22: Most virtual managers experience communication overload, but they find it necessary to do it.

It is noted that virtual managers shared a fear of insufficient communication: "am I communicating enough?", "have I missed anything out?":

> "it's being able to decide what needs to be communicated to the team and how urgent that is and to make sure you do it." (I1)
> "Keeping them informed is quite difficult, how do you actually keep them informed of changes, so they're aware of what's going on, aware of the drivers." (I6)

These comments are in line with Arnison and Miller (2002) as well as Ferreira, de Lima and da Costa (2012). The authors commented that insufficient communication among team members leads to challenges for virtual teams, such as distrust.

Finding 23: Virtual managers fear of insufficient communication.

Participants reported a massive inefficiency in default meeting length. In particular, most people tend to set default meeting time to 30 minutes, longer than needed.

> "actually a lot of meetings don't need half an hour (…) but because when you first go on to this [referring to their Microsoft Outlook calendar], it fills in half an hour. So, people just burn half an hour in time…" (I3)

Meeting literature suggests that over half of meetings are considered low in quality, not particularly effective and rarely meet their initial objectives (Schell, 2010). This ineffectiveness could be even greater in virtual teams given they already deal with numerous communication barriers. Practitioners and academics might take the issue of default meeting length into account for further investigation. So far, this topic has not been given much coverage in the existent literature.

Finding 24: **There is a massive inefficiency in default meeting length. In particular, most people tend to set default meeting time to 30 minutes, longer than needed.**

As mentioned in previous studies (e.g. Lyon, Kim and Nevo, 2010; Wasson, 2004), multi-tasking occurs during virtual meetings. Wasson (2004) claimed that multi-tasking could "enhance employee productivity when properly managed" (p.47). In general, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. González and Mark (2005) believe that multitasking should be supported by collaboration technology and systems so that information workers can do it in a more efficient way.

The interviewees confirmed that people multi-task in meetings but this actually seemed to be a concern to them.

> "sometimes we have calls, like big calls, you know, with all the other like guys, and you can have people who don't mute themselves and have side conversations, which is annoying" (I10, p.10)

> "I think the only positive effect is that a person is more likely to turn up to a meeting if they know they can multi-task all the way through it, but generally it's a bad thing. People will not fully understand what is being said or what is being asked of them." (I1, p.39)

Finding 25: **Overall, participants disfavour multi-tasking.**

Despite multi-tasking being a salient aspect of virtual meetings (Wasson, 2004), previous studies mainly focused on the advantages and disadvantages of multi-tasking (e.g. Gibson

and Cohen 2003; Lyon et al., 2010; Tang, 2005) and view it from individual aspects rather than from the organisational side.

The interviews revealed that too many meetings on the agenda can be a reason why people multi-task during virtual calls.

> "When you have 10 conference calls a day, it's physically impossible not to multi-task" (I10)

Participants also mentioned that team members are not communicating enough outside of meetings. They tend to wait until the meeting to talk to everybody and the meetings go off-topic and overrun.

> "because it's an effort to communicate, people come to just wait until that day your meeting to try and talk to everybody and then always overruns and we always go off-topic so that's a bit of a challenge" (I5)

Further recommendations to organise effective virtual meetings and address multi-tasking will be discussed in detail later.

Finding 26: **Too many calls on the agenda and team members do not have enough communication outside of meetings are some reasons of multi-tasking.**

A participant pointed out that people tend to not share small problems in one-to-one meetings, so little things build up and lead to larger issues. This finding has an important implication for virtual managers, especially new ones.

> "You got a half an hour update, you don't want to waste time (…) they only tend to bring up the really major stuffs, whereas it's actually usually the little stuff that worse because it's the little stuff that built up over time (...) If you have a big major incident, and generally everybody gets involved anyway, you know you are not alone because it's a major problem. But it's the little thing that build up, build up, build up and act as stress, that's worse." (I1, p.12)

Finding 27: **People tend to not share small problems in one-to-one meetings.**

A respondent commented that the biggest challenge he has is to interpret and respond to different people from different cultures in the same meeting.

> "I have to engage with lots of different people from different cultures at the same time. (…) I might need to be having to communicate with 5 or 5, 6 different people all from a different cultural aspect. (…) So, that phase is the biggest one to overcome." (I4)

Finding 28: Virtual managers find it challenging when they have to respond and interpret different people from different culture in the same meeting.

The language issues

In general, it takes more time and effort for non-native English speakers to process information during virtual meetings. This confirmed the viewpoint of Snyder (2003) that "even when employees have good language skills, they naturally interpret written and verbal communication through the filter of their own culture".

> "If you don't dream in English and you dream in another language right, it means that you are translating on the fly, right?". (I2)

Interviewees reported that information gets lost during translation in virtual meetings:

> "they would raise things that I don't necessarily understand (…) I think the translation get slightly lost and you can see it where people aren't sure of what they have to do, and I think that's one of the big issues" (I3)

Managers who took part in the research also commented that they find themselves and other native English-speakers talk too quick sometimes. This might cause issues for non-native speakers:

> "I end up talking very quickly. So, I've personally, I've got to slow down so people can understand what I'm saying" (I9)

> "people turning to me and say, "Can you tell me what he said?" Because they found it really hard because he speaks so quickly…." (I6)

It is noted that virtual team members tend to not ask when they struggle to understand:

> "I think language and understanding is a big thing, so, stuff gets lost in translation or sometimes people won't necessarily either understand what's needed or they won't ask" (I3)

"they don't want to be asking questions, because they don't want to show that they don't understand (…) then as a result, the issues pile up" (I10)

Finding 29: Information sometimes gets lost during translation in virtual meetings, but some people tend to not ask when they don't understand, and as a result the issues pile up and cause further problems.

The survey "2020 trends in global virtual work" (RW3 CultureWizard, 2020) revealed that 25 per cent of respondents reported that understanding diverse accents posed additional challenges when face-to-face communication was absent. In this study, interviewees reported accent as a key factor that causes difficulties in understanding:

"If someone's got a thick accent, you have to be patient and – you know – try and say, 'I'm really sorry can you repeat that?'" (I1)

Native speakers, especially those living in London for a long time and get used to dealing with different accents, reported that they do not have problem with accents, but find their non-native team members do struggle:

"Sri Lankan people they've obviously got the heaviest accent, I think. So, for me to hear their accent, it's not unusual for me because obviously I'm used to living in London and just mixing generally with lots of different accents." (I5)

Respondents reported that accent is not the only challenging factor; the different level of speaking volume across cultures can cause understanding strain to some extent:

"Americans tend to be quite loud, but clear. Our New York guys speak loud and clear when I speak to them, but there's a couple of guys in Singapore in Asia who are very quiet when they talk. They're almost whispering." (I1)

Finding 30: Non-native English-speaking virtual team members struggle understanding people with heavy accent.

Overall, the findings in the section of language issues contribute to the literature in three main ways.

Firstly, it confirmed that although at the time of this research English has been the phenomenon everywhere, virtual team members are still facing with difficulties with language barriers.

Secondly, despite language barriers as an issue commonly found in the virtual team literature (e.g. Dube and Pare, 2001; Hunsaker and Hunsaker, 2008) it is usually mentioned briefly in a few lines, or even just a few words, in virtual team research (e.g.Van Stelle, 2006; Bergiel, Bergiel and Balsmeier, 2008; Quade, Wynn, Dawson, 2020; Jurak, 2020). It is not easy to find a study that discusses language barrier in detail.

Thirdly, based on these comments, the suggested solution for this issue will be later provided in the section of organising effective virtual meetings.

The impact of culture on interpretation

Respondents revealed that people might get offended if they do not understand jokes. This is not always caused by language barrier, but culture.

> "And cultural difference things like people make jokes and things like that" (I1)

> "if someone talks to me in a certain way, I don't offend it by it. But if someone else-- if they talked someone else in the team that way, they can get offended by it." (I2)

A Senior Marketing Manager, who is not a native English speaker, shared her viewpoint:

> "I am Belarussian. And you know, I've been in UK 17 years now (…) But sometimes we do have misunderstandings too, because it's cultural, you know, like you are getting used to the reaction from the culture you come from (…) But I think, again, it's about managers, making sure they know this is a potential derailer and they just keep an eye on it" (I10)

These comments are in accordance with Yu (2014), which investigates the impact of culture on interpretation. In this research, the author concluded that culture has a significant influence on the way people perceive, understand, and give meaning to a

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phenomenon. This understanding is especially important in the virtual team environment.

However, as Yu (2014) asserted, there is little evidence about how culture affects people's communicative behaviours. There is even less evidence in virtual work settings. This is surprising given the ever-increasing phenomenon of global virtual teams, which comprise different people from diverse cultures. Challenges from cultural differences will be discussed in the next section.

Finding 31:   In a virtual team environment, culture seems to have an impact on the way people generate an interpretation of an utterance.

5.1.3 Cultural differences

Ample research has examined the differences among cultural groups, revealing cross-cultural differences in norms, values, norms and behaviour (e.g. Hofstede, 2001; Nisbett, 2003). A participant commented that:

> "there are always people of different types individually, but also on the geographical kind of scale, definitely, there'll be differences." (I4)

Differences in cultural norms and values can create difficulties including miscommunication and this can cause problems with knowledge sharing throughout the team (Davidavičienė, Al Majzoub and Meidute-Kavaliauskiene, 2020). The following section will present in detail perceptions of virtual managers regarding this issue.

Difference in email communication styles

A respondent highlighted that different cultures have different styles of communication, and these different styles can even result in confusion over email communication.

> "if there are people who don't know each other very well and don't understands their personalities and they come from different cultures, the email can come across as rude..." (I10)

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Somebody from a culture that traditionally uses passive ways of communicating can be surprised and even offended when they are sent an email from someone whose culture dictates a more aggressive style.

> "I worked with Israeli teams, you know, and initially I thought that their style of the emails is very aggressive, but then when we met and we had to chat (…) They said like, well, no, it's how we are, it's how we write" (I10)

However, past research in virtual teams mainly focused on the aspect of email as a technical enabler (e.g. Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Yu, 2015) or discussed the overuse of email (e.g. Lee-Kelley and Sankey), little attempt has been made to investigate differences in email communication style from cultural viewpoints.

Finding 32: **Different cultures have different styles of communication, and these different styles can result in confusion over email communication in virtual teams.**

Difference in problem approach

Some cultures are not forthcoming in admitting issues with their work. They prefer to deal with them in private.

> "in some cultures (…) they give you a polished amazing solution … amazing products but they're not going to want to say where the problems are. (…) That creates more problems (…) cultures where it's a lot more open and you'll say, "Hey, there is this horrible problem and we're working on it." (I8)

The interviewee, below, describes a team who remain focused on fixing the symptoms of an issue instead of the cause and that he believes this is a cultural problem.

> "if I look at Sri Lanka for example … so, Tuesday morning at 2 o'clock, something breaks and somebody will do whatever it is, log on to our server, whatever (…) fix the issue. The next morning, the same thing happens, they'll do the same thing again, (…) No one questions, why is it happening?" (I6)

The same interviewee tells a similar story around activities required to perform a software deployment. The London team tends to focus on automation so that it takes less resources whereas the Sri Lankan team will perform the activity manually each time.

> "… When we're rolling out software, for example, we really want it to be automated (…) in Sri Lanka, they wouldn't make it automated, they rely on lots of people manually doing stuff, and they go, well, we've done it, what's the problem?" (I6)

Ultimately, the key cultural difference, as described here, is that in Sri Lanka, the belief is problems can be solved by applying more and more people, whereas in London the belief is that problems should be solved with less people (and more technology).

> "I think it's more natural just to throw people at the problem, as opposed to trying to solve the problem, (…) And in Siri Lanka, maybe that costs less money because if the resources are relatively cheap (…) they're not incentivized to actually fix the root cause as well" (I6)

Finding 33: **Openness in admitting issues can vary between cultures. Some cultures prefer to remain opaque and fix them in private without revealing anything about the issues or the solutions they've implemented.**

Finding 34: **Problem approach can vary between cultures. Some cultures believe that problems can be solved by applying more people, some cultures think problems should be solved with less people and more technology.**

It is difficult to find prior research that pays attention to the difference in problem approach in virtual teams, however it is useful to raise awareness about this issue. Some solutions will be discussed in detail later.

Difference in being open to ask questions

It is important for questions to be raised early by team members. If a team member is not visible as they carry out their day-to-day work, it is difficult to assess whether they have understood the task unless they are asking questions.

> "there is a cultural bias in some places not to ask questions. And that's a big problem. (…) You may not realise that they you know, haven't understood the brief." (I7)

Language barriers may well be an obvious issue between geographically dispersed teams, but cultural differences also play a part, especially when it comes to having the confidence to ask questions.

> "Malaysian, Vietnamese, typically. Australians and Kiwis don't have a problem with asking questions. Likewise, Eastern Europeans don't typically have… if they don't understand something, they'll ask. Funny enough Ukraine, we had two people that didn't ask the brief or ask the help or ask the clarifications. And another area is of course, India and Pakistan." (I7)

These comments are in line with findings of previous intercultural research. For example, Prosser (1978, p.102) asserted that the cultural barriers may be more severe than the language problems. An education research found that teachers believed that fear of asking questions is part of the Indonesian student's culture (Suwartono and Mayaratri, 2011). However, it is difficult to identify any virtual team research that throws light on this issue, despite it causing serious problems. This issue will be discussed further in the paper.

Finding 35: **When it comes to having the confidence to ask questions, cultural differences play an important role.**

Difference in voicing disagreement

Overall, participants viewed disagreement from subordinate perspective as an important part of the team's dynamic. This is widely accepted in past research, which has confirmed employee prosocial voice to managers lead to significant positive outcomes due to its improvement-oriented nature (Hirschman 1970, Morrison and Milliken 2000, Van Dyne, Ang and Btero, 2003; Burris, Detert and Romney, 2013).

However, respondents shared that there can be a big difference between cultures in whether it's acceptable to voice disagreement, particularly to a manager.

> "I see the largest, willingness to disagree in western cultures (…) and then Asian culture people just don't really tend to disagree quite as much" (I3)

> "in Sri Lanka - they have always got the tendency to say yes to everything (…) they'll receive an email and instantly will send a reply saying "I'm looking into it" and then you won't hear anything" (I5)

Below, a manager describes his specific experience with two contrasting cultures and how they approach disagreement within the team.

> "I've done a lot of work with Latvia and Eastern Europe and they're very vocal when they don't agree (…) then you go over to Asia (…) they just won't tell you when you're wrong." (I3)

These comments are related to the individualism–collectivism dimension in Hofstede's (1980) study. People in individualistic cultures prefer to use more assertive, active and confrontational ways for resolving conflicts while those in collectivistic cultures prefer more collaborative, passive and avoidance tactics for resolving conflicts. Many following cross-cultural studies confirmed that preference for conflict avoidance is particularly found in Asian cultures, for example South Korea (Ohbuchi, Osamu, and Tedeschi, 1994), China (Chiu and Kosinski, 1994), Japan (Dyer and Song, 1997). Kirkman et al. (2004) found that empowered virtual teams have superior process improvement and customer satisfaction. However, it should be noted that there are not many virtual team studies that pay attention on cultural differences in voicing disagreement.

Finding 36: **Virtual managers acknowledged team members from different cultures have different preferences in voicing disagreement.**

Difference in social distance

Social distance is one of the most popular concepts in international sociology (Ethington, 1997). Participants reported that they find it difficult to help team members understand that people have different perceptions and viewpoints towards social distancing. They also find themselves struggling to help resolve issues in this area.

> "Some cultures are a bit more tactile (…) it's not sexual, it's not for pleasure, it is just very sort of informal (…) and it's a very sensitive area for a lot of people. So, it's quite a difficult and tricky issue to try and just help resolve. (I4)

Finding 37: **Virtual managers find it difficult to help team members understand cultural difference in social distancing.**

Difference in working hour and work-life balance

Approaches to work-life balance can vary greatly between cultures.

> "In the US, for instance, work is a fixed part of life and workers are expected to be called at home any (…) In Europe, this is not acceptable. So, you could argue you would get more performance out of a team member in the US, but I would disagree. The worker in Europe may be happier because they can spend time away from work and this makes them work harder." (I1)

> "in some other cultures like in Romania (…) these are the hours I work and I'm going to work super hard through these hours, but outside of these hours, you don't call me" (I4)

Attitudes to short notice changes in work hours can also differ, with some cultures happy

or, at least respectful, of such changes whereas others can be resistant.

> "we'll say that our Russian colleagues, for example, you know, they are work horses (…) People huff and puff in England, (…) then the Sri Lankans are very kind of very much yes, people." (I9)

Start and end times can also vary with cultures, but it doesn't necessarily influence quality

of work.

> "very few people in India that I've worked with are in the office before 9:00 A.M. (…) but they'll be quite happy to work past 7:00 P.M." (I3)

Finding 38: **Woking hours and approaches to work-life balance can be vary**

 between cultures.

Difference in taking breaks at work

Attitudes to work breaks and lunchtimes can also differ from culture to culture.

> "in Italy, it was very much sort of one hour for lunch, sort of twelve or one o'clock without fail every day" (I4)

> "I never realised how many breaks our Indian staff has." (I3)

Even such questions as 'where to eat lunch?' can result in different answers depending on

the culture.

> "In the UK for example, (…) everyone eats their lunch in front of their computer. In all the Indian offices I've been to, that's completely banned." (I3)

Managers must respect certain events in different cultures even if those events do not have the same level of sanctity in their own culture. For instance, one manager shared her experience of French employees' attitude to scheduled lunch breaks and how disrupting their schedule can demotivate the team.

> "It's important to have lunch for French. That's true. So, for me, if I had French team, I would never put big calls at lunchtime, ever (…) because I know when you put the big calls, when the French team has lunch, they'll be pissed off" (I10)

Understanding the root of this behaviour is important and that some behaviours are endemic to certain cultures and respected if managers want a productive team.

> "I think by doing this, A you understand what the behaviour is, and B, you can work around it" (I10)

Finding 39: Attitudes to work breaks and lunchtimes can differ from culture to culture. virtual managers should respect them if they want a productive team.

Differences in speech etiquette and mannerism

Speech mannerisms can cause communication issues, particularly if the speech is peppered with cultural 'ticks'.

> "some of the cultures are very direct, very short and very sharp, which isn't good or bad, it's a difference, whereas others are a lot slower, a lot more of please, please, please, thank you, thank you, thank you." (I4)

Behaviour when someone else is speaking is also important as it informs the speaker how seriously they are being taken and the level of respect they are being afforded, but different cultures find different conversational behaviours acceptable. The manager below described his time in Italy and his initial confusion during conversations with Italians.

> "the interesting thing about the way Italians talk (..) is that they talk over each other a lot. So, they'll have a conversation but they'll both be talking at the same time (…) you think they're ignoring you or interrupting you (…) but that's actually not the case." (I1)

Finding 40: Virtual managers perceived differences in speech etiquette and mannerism between cultures.

Difference in the way people socialise and build relationships

Team socialising can bring team members closer together, but acceptable social activities vary between cultures and some simply cannot be done with team members in separate geographical locations.

> "if you're working remotely you don't go to the pub together …" (I8)

One manager describes how important alcohol is to the London social scene, but not necessarily in New York, so different social activities must be identified that can suit all team members.

> "In London as well, building relationship is strengthened over going for drinks (…) They don't do lots of boozing in New York in the way people do in London, so you have to find other things to socialise around…" (I1)

Finding 41: **Virtual managers aware cultural differences in the way people socialise and build relationship.**

5.1.4 Key issues and challenges in team building

Many spontaneous interactions are difficult to recreate virtually

A lot of social relationships are built on rapport which depends on a more informal, style of contact, but communication between virtual teams usually occurs during a scheduled meeting where there is little room for casual conversation.

> "obviously it's a challenge to build rapport" (I5)

> "I think it is difficult to get the kind of spontaneous interactions that you would just by bumping into people" (I3)

The 'bustle' of an office can promote team building. This energy can be lost online, even with some of the more modern virtual tooling available.

> "the nicest things I find when you get an office, and there's an agile Kanban board [and] there's post-it notes and people moving it around and there's energy behind it" (I3)

Finding 42: **Virtual managers considered team building challenging as many spontaneous interactions are difficult to recreate virtually.**

Team building activities can be costly and must be scheduled

Social activity between co-located teams can be flexible and impromptu, but when the team is geographically separated it requires a lot more planning and can be expensive.

> "You get to half past five or six o'clock whatever you can just say to all of them "you know what, you fancy a beer?" (…) if they are global you have to schedule specific point a head, especially for things like Xmas party and stuff. My firm doesn't do it, but I know some firms will fly people to the location specifically for Xmas party." (I1)

Finding 43:   Team building activities can be costly and must be scheduled.

Less oversight on team activities

Virtual team members require a higher level of trust than co-located team members simply because the manager cannot see what they are doing day-to-day.

> "The presence of a manager in the same room as you it is naturally a kind of something that motivates people to concentrate on their work." (I5)

If work is not being done and tasks are not being completed, it is not always obvious because the employee is not being observed. In some cases, the manager will have no idea if the employee even turned up to work that day.

> "it's not always apparent when things aren't being done because I can't be sure if my team member right now is at work" (I5)

Finding 44:   Virtual managers reported having less oversight on team activities.

Less oversight of team inference from local managers

Team members geographically separated from their manager and in a different office are vulnerable to requests for work coming from local managers.

> "And you also have to trust that anybody else around them in that location who isn't necessarily part of the team is not going to give them work" (I1)

Participants indicated that managers could make it clear to their team members that they have the autonomy to refuse such requests but, even then, this may not be fully understood.

" pressure comes from the [senior] guys out there and [the virtual team members] are not getting that they can refuse." (I1)

Managers rely on team members reporting that additional work is being passed to them, but it doesn't always happen. If work requests are infrequent or casual, the employee may forget or think it's insignificant, but multiple external work requests will ramp up the time significantly.

> "a lot of the time they won't mention it. Simply, maybe because something that only happens once a week, or once or twice a month, but it doesn't matter, it will still build up (smiled) or they forget about it when we have one-to-one" (I1)

Finding 45: **As virtual managers have less oversight of team inference, virtual team members are vulnerable to requests for work coming from local managers, which they find difficult to refuse.**

Less ownership over recruitment, progression and remuneration

Typically, managers will get involve in the recruitment process for a team, but will sometimes find this handled out of the local office meaning they could be onboarding team members despite having never met or spoken to them before.

> "My colleagues are recruiting them to the team, and I think I trust those guys to meet my requirement because I trust those - their judgement - but yeah. (…) sadly, I didn't get a chance to speak to the guy" (I5)

Occasionally, team compensation and career progression for a virtual employee will be managed by their local office, not the global virtual team manager. This could mean the employee is more likely to align themselves with the local management team who are the ones with the power to decide on pay and promotions.

> "although I manage their teamwork, in theory, I'm not the person that decides their promotions (…) loyalties always will lie with the local management because they're the ones who decide pay and promotions." (I3)

Finding 46: **Sometimes virtual managers may find they have less ownership over recruitment, progression and remuneration for their team members.**

In summary, team building is seen as a core aspect of human resource management (Huemann et al., 2007; Turner, Huemann and Keegan, 2008; Aga et al., 2016), and defined by Klein et al. (2009, p. 3) as 'the formal and informal team-level interventions that focus on improving social relations and clarifying roles as well as solving task and interpersonal problems that affect team functioning'. However, the findings in this section indicate that virtual team managers must deal with significant challenges in team building due to less oversight, less ownership and less spontaneous interactions. These drawbacks have a negative influence on virtual team collaboration but are not well understood and require more research. The implications of team building are discussed later in the paper.

5.1.5 Key issues and challenges in building trust

Trust is a critical factor to virtual team's success

All statements analysed confirmed that trust plays an essential role in virtual team's success. This corresponds well with numerous articles in the existing literature (Hart and Saunders, 1997; Mancini, 2010; Rose and Schlichter, 2013; Singh et al., 2015).

> "you need to have trust, you need to understand you know, behaviours and what's behind behaviours.." (I10)
> "A high trust team is a very, very effective group, I think people that don't trust each other just don't work" (I3)

Finding 47:   Most virtual managers acknowledged that trust is essential and valuable.

Interviewees believed that virtual teams rely heavily on the belief that team members will do the work assigned to them without needing to be monitored.

> "Trust is allowing people to work flexibly without being monitored all of the time" (I5)
> "you have to really, really, really trust them that they are going to do their work" (I1)

These comments are in accordance with the argument of Kirkman et al. (2002) that virtual teams rely heavily on task-based trust, which is the belief that team members will do their

job. Furthermore, interviewees noted that accountability stands at the centre of trust in virtual teams:

> "trust in the people that if they see an issue that they report it regardless of whether it's something they've done by accident or not. (…) you need that trust in people to be open and honest…" (I9)
> "are they turning up on time, are they sitting at their desk, doing their contract allowed, you know, actually doing their work? And then you got to "are they doing the right work", and that is basically are they doing work that they should be doing?" (I1)

As presented in literature review, the existing literature has indicated various types of trust within organisations. Tyran et al (2003) suggested to categorise trust into three types: role performance trust, altruistic behaviour, and affective bond trust. According to Zhu, Newman, Miao, and Hooke (2013), trust can be either cognitive or affective. It is suggested that trust also can be classified as impersonal and interpersonal (Vanhala, Puumalainen and Blomqvist, 2011; Vanhala, Heilmann, and Salminen, 2016) or interpersonal trust and task-based trust (Kirkman et al., 2002).

In the present research, most comments related to trust focused on highlighting that virtual managers need to trust that their team members do the right work - the work assigned to them - that they follow guidance and work towards the team's goal as well as the firm's goal, and report issues as they occur. This revealed that role performance trust or task-based trust plays a critical role in global virtual teams.

Finding 48: **Virtual teams rely heavily on task-based trust, of which accountability stands at the centre.**

Trust: a journey over time

The statements from interviewees suggested that elements such as background and experience, might have an influence on a team member's trustworthiness.

> "A lot of the trust comes from their background, their experience, their maturity and you know, if they're a kid straight out of school can you really trust them to get on diligently with their work?" (I1)

This corresponds well with McKnight et al. (1998) assertion that initial trust is formed based on an individual's disposition or institutional cues. When two individuals meet for the first time, the first impression will automatically and unconsciously affect the trust between these two persons.

However, it is also commonly agreed that trust can be built gradually over time (Brown et al., 2004; Fuller, Serva and Benamati, 2007; Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1999; Rempel, Holmes and Zanna, 1985; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Vanneste et al., 2014; Zand, 1972). Interviewees confirmed this:

> "I think trust is a very important, but you need to build trust." (I10)
> "The reason why we trust [Name] he has been with us for two years." (I2)

Finding 49: **Trust is a journey over time. Initial trust exists, but trust still needs to be built, and it takes longer with a virtual team.**

It is harder to build trust in virtual teams

Most participants revealed that while trust needs to be built, it is much harder to do so in virtual teams.

> "with a physical team, a co-located team, I think you can get to a point where you trust each other within weeks to months. Whereas the thing to do that on a global basis is-- you're talking like multiple months to years" (I3)
> "being able to work and collaborate in person will always be stronger than through any sort of technology or sort of other medium" (I4)

Trust tends to be built over informal interactions in the hallway or "water cooler" (e.g. Kugelmass, 1995; Kirkman et al., 2002; Vega, 2003; Ford, Piccolo and Ford, 2017), which cannot be done in virtual teams:

> "when you have an ability to meet and you know, you meet people, you have your meeting face-to-face and you go to the restaurant, have dinner together, talk about you know, families, friends, hobbies, everything, then you see the real person.." (I10)
> "I think you need to build up a rapport to talk to each other, and I think that's a lot harder to do [virtually]." (I3)

As discussed earlier in the section of key issues in team building, it is harder to build trust as virtual managers have less oversight on team member activities and less ownership over

the recruitment process, career progression and remuneration. Virtual team members also tend to do things that benefit their own location more than the overall team:

> "people in global teams would definitely do things that benefit their location more than the overall team (…) we see that a lot actually" (I3)

In addition, culture plays an important role in trust. It is revealed that team members from some cultures need to be actively managed and, even maybe monitored, whereas others can be trusted with a certain amount of autonomy.

> "some of the high performing Americans are very difficult to manage, because they're very difficult to trust (…) the experience I've had is they're very much out for themselves" (I3)

Finding 50: **Virtual managers faced particular difficulties to build trust in virtual teams without the benefits of face-to-face contacts. These difficulties are mainly caused by lack of face-to-face interactions, less oversight, less ownership and also cultural differences.**

Virtual team members need more altruistic trust and affective bond trust from their managers

While most virtual managers acknowledge that it's important for them to be able to trust their subordinates, they are aware that virtual team members themselves also need to be able to trust their managers.

> "they need to make sure I am representing them properly at the firm. If anything goes wrong, I am not blaming them behind their back (…) they kind of have to trust that I'm doing the right thing and I have to trust that they are doing the right thing. (I1)

This comment aligns with the concept of team emotional authenticity, as discussed earlier. It also provides a clear description of the importance of altruistic trust in global virtual teams. As previous studies suggested, altruistic trust has to do with the team's belief that the leader will behave in an ethical manner and do the right thing for the team regardless of sacrificing self-interest (Flammia, Cleary and Slattery, 2016; Tyran et al, 2003).

Another common type of trust is affective bond trust, which deals with a person's ability to build friendship bonds with team members (Flammia, Cleary and Slattery, 2016; Tyran et al, 2003). Participants showed that they pay serious attention to this issue.

> "I'm make sure that I also always pay attention to her career and personal development, which I think it kind of builds trust as well. So, it's not just all about, you know, projects and deliverables." (I10)

Finding 51:   Virtual team members need more altruistic trust and affective bond trust from their managers.

A breach of trust can negatively affect communication and work outcomes.

Schilcher et al. (2011) suggested that if a situation ends up with a breach of trust, it can lead to an erosion of collaboration between companies, or at least impede them. An interviewee further commented that without trust people act differently, they do not help each other as much as they could or miss out on help that would have been available if there was an increased level of trust. He emphasised:

> "you usually end up with individuals or parts of the team just not communicating with another part of the team, which can be sort of problematic" (I4)

He explained that most of the time this happened because of a difference in individual values:

> "if person A asks person B to do some work for them and then person B says yes, and then person A comes back tomorrow and says oh, have you got that thing for me, I need it for 5 minutes and person B says, oh no, I didn't do it (…) person A now has a trust issue because person B didn't deliver what they said they would…" (I4)

These comments provide essential insights to build trust in virtual teams, which will be discussed in detail later.

Finding 52:   Differences in values may cause misunderstanding, and ultimately affect trust.

Finding 53: Understanding each other's personal values, behaviours and what behinds behaviours is crucial for virtual teams to build trust. Without these, trust can be eroded and cause problematic issues.

Finding 54: A breach of trust can negatively affect communication and work outcomes in virtual teams.

5.1.6 Time zone problem

Time differences cause challenging issues for both virtual managers and team members

Participants revealed the significant challenge in setting up meetings across time zones:

> "we do try and work out what time we should set things (…) so it doesn't end up being like midnight for anyone is kind of important" (I3)

For virtual managers, a participant revealed that a common question is: can the manager go home on time or is he leaving the team without management?

> "it's the end of your day, it is the beginning of their day, it is the uh, why do I have to stay back for two hours" (I2)

At the same time, participants revealed that team members also can be hesitant to disturb managers at unsociable hours, even if there is good reason:

> "it's Singapore time eight thirty in the morning and that's about midnight or whatever over here, so I'm probably asleep (…) and, all of a sudden, something happens they need to talk to someone about it. (…) from their point of view that's a really tricky thing to do when you know you're disturbing somebody" (I1)

Finding 55: It is challenging to set up meetings in virtual teams due to time zone difference.

Finding 56: Both virtual managers and team members faced significant challenges due to time differences. For managers it is work/life balance, for team members it is concerns about disturbing managers at unsociable hours.

In summary, the findings in this section resonate with current literature, in which time zone difference is considered as the most immediately obvious hurdle in global virtual teams (Jimenez et al., 2017). For example, in a project for education collaboration, Ito et al. (2015) found that different time zones cause difficulties in meeting schedules and time misunderstanding, even with a team split between Japan and Malaysia which have a one-hour time difference. In the context of this FinTech research, the challenges in setting up meetings across time zones are even more complicated because the teams usually comprise of people from three to seven different time zones and countries. Furthermore, additional points raised such as concern among team members about disturbing managers at unsociable hours, provide valuable insights for managerial recommendations that will be presented in the following sections.

5.1.7 Technology-related problems

Background noise

Background noise has been seen as a challenge in virtual meetings (Keefe, Lang, Rumsey, and True, S., 2016). However, for virtual teams at global scale, the problem cannot be easily fixed by purchasing headsets or standalone microphones as mentioned in Tremaine, Milewski, Egan and Zhang (2007), or even by creating a charter that establishes norms of behaviour, as Watkins (2013) suggested.

For example, a participant revealed that the source of background noise can come from low quality telephone lines between countries, weather change, heavy rain, tropical birds or noisy roads:

> "the telephone lines between London and Sri Lanka are really not very good. It would appear there's always some kind of interference (…) heavy rain there will just be this huge kind of like [makes whooshing sound] (…) one of my pet hates is well you can sit on a phone call and spend like five minutes explaining something in a lot of detail to people (…) you ask them a question then they'll say, I'm sorry can you repeat that that." (I5)

Lack of technological tools

Lack of reliable technological tools is an issue for virtual teams. A managing director of a

multinational consultancy claimed that:

> "I do genuinely think the companies don't spend enough money on the tooling and
> the equipment that's needed behind remote work" (I3)

At the smaller scale of management, a technical lead pointed out differences in the way

virtual teams get together in meetings mean there is a requirement for different tooling

than for co-located teams.

> "You need to have the right tools, I think (…) We don't really have the tools to do
> that at the moment although we're told eventually, we're going to get whiteboarding
> ability [for their virtual meeting software]" (I5)

Technology breakdown

Virtual teams are dependent on technology in ways that co-located teams are not and when

this technology breaks team members can literally lose all contact with each other.

Furthermore, the risk can be expensive to mitigate, as in the example below where a

company needed to maintain multiple different sets of communication cables should any of

them be stolen.

> "we used to run the trading system for the [Name], down in South Africa (…) some
> farmers will be digging up the cables, because they could sell these cables, right?
> (…) all this redundancy coming up through Africa, all these buried cables, it's
> crazy." (I6)

The quality of communication between teams can also be dependent on the quality of

communications infrastructure in countries. where that quality is deficient, other tools must

be employed.

> "people's telephone lines in Sri Lanka might not be as good as talking to someone
> in England (…) So, people sometimes go from working over, having a connection
> on their laptops, going to their mobile." (I9)

There are also problems if the technology does not have the capacity to cope with the

number of participants.

"when we started the lock-down we were using the conference line system where you just dial in and enter your code (…) but that quickly got overloaded (…) you wouldn't be able to log into the call because it was just too busy (…) we found that if we organized the conference call at like quarter past the hour instead of on the hour (…) it was less likely to have many people opening a call at that time. (I5)

When technology is replaced, it can be difficult to roll out the replacement to all teams simultaneously. Different team members in different locations may be using different versions of tools or different tools altogether.

"we've got lots of different tools. Because what happens in [Company Name] they've got one tool and then want to replace it with another one so we start using the new one but they never quite managed to get rid of the old one." (I5)

Finding 57: **Virtual team experience difficulties dealing with background noise in virtual meetings.**

Finding 58: **Virtual managers complained that companies do not invest enough on the tooling and the equipment that's needed behind virtual work.**

Finding 59: **The quality of communication between teams can also be dependent on the quality of communications infrastructure in countries.**

Finding 60: **There is a need for technical communication tools that have the capacity to deal with the larger number of participants than the available ones.**

Finding 61: **Virtual teams tend to use different version of tools or different tools altogether for two main reasons. Firstly, when the quality of communication is deficient, other tools must be available. Secondly, when technology is replaced, it can be challenging to roll out the replacement to all teams simultaneously.**

Daim et al. (2012, p.199) hold that "Communication breakdown can wreak havoc on a project as team members struggle to effectively communicate and work with one another As a result, project delivery risks with distributed teams tend to be greater when compared to co-located teams." The comments in this section shared a common view and provided a closer look into issues around the technologies itself and suggested that organisations should pay more attention on technical enablers for global virtual working. The findings revealed that at a larger global scale, it is not as simple as Hill and Bartol's (2018) arguments, "performance depends on how people use these technologies, not on the technologies themselves". There are many factors such as communications infrastructure and social scenarios in countries where team members are based that can immediately affect technologies and team performance, and this is totally out of their control.

5.1.8 Problems regarding oversea travel

Family ties

As pointed out previously, there will be requirements for virtual team members to travel and meet. In some interviews, managers claimed that up to a month could be spent in a different location. As the manager below points out, family is the biggest blocker when it comes to team members travelling to other locations.

> "family ties are normally the biggest restriction, which I guess is normally children, young children I'd say, is very, very understandably for the parents that won't travel or leave a single parent alone with the children for a month." (I4)

Long-haul flights, jetlag and busy schedule

Long-haul flights to far-away destinations can be exhausting especially when the time spent in is relatively short.

"You're leaving on a Saturday – the flight left at 14:00 on a Saturday you'd get into Japan at 16:00 on a Sunday, right? (…) Friday you're on your way home. You leave on Friday night at 17 o'clock, or whatever it is (…) feel like crap for the whole weekend and then go back into the office on Monday?" (I2)

Some people simply do not like flying or long flights.

"I don't really want to travel for 8 hours and then go into work! It's not my idea of – of – or even to Singapore for fourteen hours" (I1)
"I haven't been to Singapore. Yeah, I can't do 14 hours on flight" (I2)

Lack of travel policy for global virtual team managers

Firms do not always make their travel policy clear, and, in some cases, the policy does not exist for or apply to certain parts of the firm. Below, a manager describes his view that parts of an organisation not responsible for direct revenue will often have travel costs scrutinised a more than revenue-generating teams such as Sales.

"you have this issue in firms – especially technology firms – where the support teams and the operational teams…they're not there to make money they're there to support. (…) If I need to send a salesperson out to Timbuctoo and they're after a big million-pound contract, well let's pay ten grand and send them out (…) Whereas for me, it's like I'm spending x amount of money to send [Name] to New York for two weeks, what do I get in return?" (I1)

Cost of travel

Ultimately, the cost of travel and accommodation in different geographies is unavoidable, but some firms more than others must keep a tight rein on these costs.

"the issue is when it comes down to money (laughs) so, they're going to have to fly people out there, they're going to have to put them up in hotels" (I1, p.21)
"my firm is technically still a start-up and using money from investors not their own money, so they have to be very, very careful." (I1, p.22)

Finding 62:   When it comes to team members travelling to other locations, family ties are normally the biggest restriction.

Finding 63:   Virtual managers concern about long-haul flights, jetlag and busy schedule when travel abroad.

Finding 64: **Firms do not always make their travel policy clear, and, in some cases, the policy does not exist for or apply to certain parts of the firm.**

Finding 65: **While the cost of travel and accommodation in different geographies is unavoidable, some companies, more than others, must keep a tight rein on these costs.**

Further discussion about benefits of physical visiting local offices

Often, meeting team members on-site at their location can be an eye-opening experience for managers who see, for the first time, how their employees live. These are details that can affect an employee's mood, behaviour and, ultimately, quality of work but cannot be easily understood when communicating by video conference, email or telephone.

> "a lot of the folk in Bangalore, actually what they do is they stay in a hostel during the week, where they're in like a multi-room hostel with a lot of other people, they'll go to their job every day, and on the weekend they then go back to their smaller Indian village." (I3)

> "The purpose of going out there was primarily observation (…) I actually want me to hear about the little things because the big things I probably know about anyway" (I1)

Sitting out in the remote employee's office gives managers a chance to observe behaviour, build closer relationships and see how they're treated in the office generally.

> "When I first started, they sent me to New York for two weeks (…) it was really beneficial because you could sit with them and you could see how they did things and you could – erm – put names to faces" (I1)

> "We had a guy [Name] come over for six months last year and it's now you know we've fully integrated [Garbled] whereas with other colleagues in Sri Lanka team it's almost very is very distant kind of you don't really know who they are." (I5)

It also gives managers a chance to share tips or working practices or tools that have been successfully used in other locations.

> "to watch what they do and how do they take work on and are they using any tools that they could take back home or any ideas they could take back home with them." (I1)

On-site visits help managers in understanding the different cultures and their approaches to business.

> "if I think back to when I was initially managing people in Japan, and I've never been to Japan, it was quite hard, I never quite understood it, and then after going over there and then going to Singapore subsequently, I then understood the cultural differences quite a lot." (I3)

> "I think physically visiting the locations or getting people to physically interact, I think is really beneficial, that makes a massive difference. "(I3)

Finding 66: **Virtual mangers suggested a number of benefits of physical visiting local office in mentoring, motivating, building rapport, enhancing their understanding about team members and cultural differences.**

In summary, while it is not doubted that sending global virtual managers abroad costs a significant amount of time and money for organisations, it also provides several benefits and, as Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020) asserted, helps to avoid drawbacks associated with distance.

5.2 Global virtual management competencies

This section aims to answer the research question: What are the competencies that managers need to be effective in the virtual world?

Krumm et al. (2016, p.123) defined competency as "collections of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics that are needed for effective performance in the jobs in questions". The authors asserted that very little is known about competencies that virtual teamwork requires. In the context of this research, the general feeling among the managers interviewed was that there were no competencies or skills *specific* to managing virtual teams.

> "I wouldn't say a different skill set, but (…) it's a lot of soft skills that you need to have." (I10)

> "Similar ones that you'd have in the office? I don't think it changes from a global perspective." (I9)

However, some did point out certain management skills that needed to be particularly honed.

> "Good communication skills, obviously being clear when you're talking, if you've got different people, you know English isn't their primary language." (I9)

5.2.1 Communication and technology skills

Communication and communicate related subjects regularly came up when discussing core competencies for managing virtual teams.

> "for me communication is as important for a local manager as it is for a remote manager." (I4)

Effective listeners

Listening becomes especially important along with an understanding of people's culture and the way that culture dictates their communication style.

> "I think they need to be good listeners. I think they need to adjust their communication style to the people that they're listening to" (I3)

> "you don't motivate by telling. You motivate by listening, I think." (I2)

Managers must understand that people may not be used to an accent or a particular communication style and give them the opportunity to ask questions and the freedom to say, without judgement, that they don't understand the request.

> "… phrase it such that you're not putting them on the spot to say "no, I didn't understand anything". But you've given them an opportunity to ask for more information or ask for it to be repeated." (I6)

Flexible in speaking style

A certain amount of self-awareness is required so managers can adjust their style to suit people who do not speak English as a first language or are listening on a crackling phone line.

"I'm sometimes difficult to understand, even by local folks, so, I tend to try and speak slightly slower. And I probably use less colloquial dialogue, so, I tend to use slightly better English" (I3)

"You've got to appreciate that, although they will speak English, they won't necessarily speak English as well as you, so you need to avoid things like slang and make sure you speak properly." (I1)

Provide feedback

Feedback can be categorised according to its frequency: Real-time/instant feedback, regular one/two-week formal feedback and official company-wide appraisals, typically once a year but can be as often as quarterly in some companies:

"what we would probably do is kind of make sure you've got more regular kind of catch-up sessions. Yeah, if you didn't think they're performing, you might have a, you know, weekly or biweekly." (I9)

When providing constructive feedback about a problem it is important to talk to the person and not rely on, what a manager called, the 'machete message'.

"so, on the side of the manager, they've got to be proactive in saying that something was good or bad (…) if there was like a really big problem, you know, not just writing the machete message but actually saying, Hey, have you got a second to get on a call?" (I8)

Feedback, even negative, should be constructed in such a way as to make the team member feel motivated.

"if you give some negative feedback and then that employee fixes it and then your next piece of positive feedback is, "Hey, thank you so much for dealing with that problem". And now everything's amazing and then they're going to be happy that they've fixed it" (I8)

Feedback must be provided in the appropriate forum. The team does not benefit from hearing negative feedback being given to a specific team member.

"there's lots of bad ways to provide feedback, like telling someone they've done a bad job in front of the whole team on a call or on a group channel." (I8)

Effective use of communication and collaboration tools

Daim et al (2012) asserted that beyond choosing technology, managers must identify how

and when the tools should be used. Interviewees provided a detailed insight into this issue.

Know how to use the tools

Geographically dispersed teams can be dependent on tools to communicate so it's

important that their managers master them and ensure teams are enabled to use them.

> "I think gone are the days when managers could get away with claiming, 'Oh, I
> don't know anything about this' or 'Technology? Paw' they need to be able to use
> these – erm – these tools to connect" (I1)

> "I think they need to understand the tooling that needs to go ahead of it." (I3)

> "that's one of the big ones for me, I guess to focus on and to understand what tools
> or what processes we can do as teams and team leaders to overcome and to improve
> sort of the communication between the team" (I4)

Just knowing how to use the tool is not enough. Managers must understand how a

particular tool can unite the team and give everyone visibility of each other's work.

> "there's much bigger onus on leveraging those kind of tools, collaboration tools and
> communication tools (…) that is a kind of skill in its own right." (I5)

> "You need to be using tooling that you can see what people are doing and you don't
> have to chase anyone." (I9)

Know when to use which tools

There are a number of communication tools available with different advantages and

requirements and that make use of different styles of communication. Managers need to

understand as many of these tools as possible so they can select the best ones for their

team.

> "Slack, would be used for instant messaging (…) we'd be using a sort of
> collaborative sharing software like Confluence and to share documents and work
> together on a single document (…) we always make sure there's a regular video call
> as well." (I4)

"the main skills I think are in how you use the tools that are available to you to glue the team together (…) it's a bit of an art to knowing which of these things to deploy best to solve the problem" (I5)

It's important that each tool is used for the task it was designed for, but sometimes this may not be possible. The manager, below, uses the example of a chat tool being used when information should be put into a ticketing system. Where something like this is unavoidable, relevant information should be moved to the correct tool as soon as possible.

"don't use emails, use the ticketing systems to record the narrative that's going on so you can look back at it. I mean, we look back at things we've done years ago and understand why they were done in such a way (..) Then use chat but just be aware and you need to take that valuable information out of those tools into something that's going to record that for future.." (I5)

Contacting team members does not always have to be a formality (e.g. by scheduling a conference call), just as with co-located teams spontaneously leaning across desks and starting informal conversations, managers should be comfortable with picking up a phone and starting a conversation with their team member.

"don't think that you need a conference call to talk on the phone. You can just, you know, agree to talk on the phone for a short period of time without having to book a timeslot." (I5)

Regular feedback sessions and catch-ups are also important to keep the team aware of the status of their work.

"have those regular feedback sessions they daily catch-ups with the team just where everybody keeps the visibility of what everybody's doing" (I5)

Know to use which tool with whom

Different personalities will have their preferred methods of communication. Some people will prefer talking directly on the phone or via video conference, but others may prefer email or chat. It is important managers adapt to the individual's preferences.

"I prefer to talk to somebody on the phone about something, but there definitely will be [preferences] to use chat app rather than talking. So, I suppose you need to adapt to the individual people that know how to best communicate with them." (I5)

"as long as you've got the right (…) collaboration and communication tools available to you, it's about how you use those tools and how you encourage the team to use those tools." (I5)

5.2.2 Team buildings skills

Augment team orientation

Managers must ensure that the team has a sense of identity and is clear about their mission.

"Make sure (…) there is a sense of team, that the team is brought together to build and deliver a function" (I7)

"working together as a team towards something, achieving something or supporting something or building something." (I6)

Organise team building events

Although, it is more challenging to arrange team building events with virtual teams it should not be avoided. Modern communication tools enable informal get-togethers and even if there is extra effort involved in arranging the event, it is generally considered as worth it.

"We have like a multi-user quiz and we attract people into teams (…) so, rather than having a team in India and a team in Latvia, we kind of split it, three people in Latvia, three people in India, then we'll play it together (…) you want to make people feel like they're on the same team as the person in the other region rather than just their local team" (I3)

Grouping team members from different, geographically dispersed teams together during informal social events can get the team used to this arrangement when it comes to their actual work or training.

"We put groups together across location, virtual groups that then will sort of do work on some projects or work on some training." (I4)

Promote an inclusive work environment

Each person must feel part of the team. Virtual managers need to put extra effort into this and must avoid favouring people who sit next to them in the office.

> "Waking up at 6 o'clock in the morning because you have to call Singapore right (…) Because if you don't do it, the person on the other end doesn't feel as if they're a part of your team." (I2)

> "what you don't want is a certain people in your virtual team to feel that they're not part of the team, so, you need to make sure that everyone feels included." (I6)

Build trust and rapport

Although not exclusive to virtual teams, trust and rapport are especially critical.

> "I think making sure that they build trust and rapport, has really been the key" (I3)

Rapport can only be maintained by frequent communication and correct use of tooling to ensure everyone stays in touch with everyone else.

> "how you glue people together with all of these communication tools and ticketing tools to make them feel like they're in a team as one." (I5)

5.2.3 Emotional Intelligence

Show empathy

Trying to perceive events from a team members point of view can be especially important in virtual teams, especially when the manager is aware the team member comes from a different culture than their own.

> "I think one of the big ones is having empathy (…) Sort of understand the differences in the people's motivations, intentions, and to care about them." (I4)

> "a lot of it is around the empathy, right. It's about building empathy" (I2)

Team members may be citizens of countries that face vastly different challenges to everyday work than the manager's own country and managers must be sympathetic to these challenges.

"Sri Lanka, they might be in an earthquake zone, and in April and it rains a lot, and you get power cuts and all this kind of stuff. (…) people might have a 2-hour commute in awful traffic to travel 5 miles. So, be sympathetic to that..." (I6)

Be patient

Patience is required when dealing with the different cultures and languages. A lot of adjustment is needed from managers to their working style if they're to accommodate employees in different countries to their own.

"you have to be patient" (I1)

"Definitely need to be patient because things aren't going to be as easy as they are."(I5)

Manage conflict

Conflict management is one of the key emotional intelligence competencies that separate outstanding leaders from average ones, and it is much more difficult when the team are virtual and geographically separated.

The manager below describes how his employees feel more confident in starting conflict using Slack (a text-based virtual chat tool).

"The arguments that we have in our team escalate quickly (…) It is just like as well people are a bit more, they can be a bit more I'd say brash or confident on Slack than they would be in real life…" (I2)

Dealing with the conflict is something that comes up frequently when talking to managers.

"You know trying to keep the peace, you've got to be the ultimate parent." (I2)

When the conflict is between co-located teams, it is easier to get all parties into a room to discuss the problem but with virtual team's other methods need to be found.

"if you have a face-to-face conflict, you kind of, you know, like you can then go like half an hour later and talk to a person. In virtual teams, you obviously don't have this". (I10)

Manage personal emotion

Time differences and misunderstandings, or even a lack of confidence in dealing with events can result in teams contacting managers at unsociable hours. Managers must respond with patience, no matter how inconvenient this is at the time.

> "If they call you by mistake don't get angry with them (…) If it happens again and again and again then you need to be quite firm but not at the time they call you. You do it the next day" (I1)

5.2.4 Leadership style

Interviewees were asked about their leadership style with a number of different answers.

Transactional leadership

The manager, below, points out that even though she desires to be transformational all the time, she often has to pivot between transformation and transactional depending on the situation. At the time of interview, she was forced to adopt a transactional style as there were deadlines approaching.

> "I want to be a transformational leader, but to being realistic, I think because of the nature of the situation and what we do, I'm probably more of a transactional now, because you just need to make the project happen" (I10)

However, another participant argued that transactional leadership does not fit virtual teams as it involves micromanagement and implies lack of trust:

> "Dealing in transactions with the team means constantly micromanaging each team member which is stressful for both sides (…) It also implies a lack of trust (I don't trust them to work unless I specifically reward them) which you can't have in a virtual team" (I1)

Transformational leadership

A managing director of a global consultancy describes himself as a transformational leader and points out that he believes team members should be given long-term targets and the autonomy to meet those targets.

> "my leadership style tends to be based around giving staff members a clear vision but ensuring that they have the room/ability to execute against this (without micromanagement." (I3)

> "I think you get much better results from transformational leadership where staff members are given large and long-term targets to deliver against - as opposed to being managed very hands on with multiple different tasks." (I3)

Servant leadership

The concept of servant leadership appeared quite frequently when participants discussed

their transformational leadership style. For example:

> "you know leadership here is seen as servant, well I think is seen as serving more than more than it's seen as dictatorial, right. So, I think London, England has that sort of serving relationship" (I2)

> "this kind of like servant leadership style worked well for me, whereas I tend to-- I get the best out of people by trying to make them happy and do what they want and kind of helping them." (I3)

Hybrid leadership

One manager was reluctant to describe himself as a transaction or transformational leader

and, instead, claimed his style was a hybrid of the two. The nature of his work meant that

almost a third of it required specific delegation from management plus transformational

leadership is too difficult when communication with virtual team members cannot be

carried out person-to-person.

> "I would consider myself as a hybrid between transactional and transformational leader. (…) I also believe that a combination of transactional and transformative leadership is more effective in virtual teams. The transactional side is easier since work can be delivered and managed via multiple electronic formats, however the transformational side is more difficult due to there being no in-person communication." (I4)

Berson and Avolio (2004) stated that despite there being numerous styles of leadership,

transactional and transformational are the two most relevant to virtual teams. The

interviews suggested that, in terms of practice, a leader can be a hybrid of different

leadership styles without an inherent contradiction. In particular, while transformational

and transactional leadership are different, they can complement each other occasionally, depending on circumstances. A participant argued:

"I'm not sure if it's actually kind of clean divide personally." (I9)

Below, a respondent describes himself as transformational but points out that he likes to mix in some transactional approaches too.

"I would consider myself to be transformational. Aspects of transactional leadership are important, such as a clear understanding of expectations and provision of feedback (…) However, it's far more effective as part of an overall transformational approach." (I8)

As mentioned above, a managing director while considered himself as transformational leader still find servant leadership work well for him. In summary, it appears that hybrid leadership is a fruitful area that future research may want to investigate further. Influence of virtualness and national culture on leadership style could be also taken into account, as participants suggested.

5.2.5 Experience

Experience in managing global virtual teams plays an important role.

Nearly all managers pointed out the importance of experience in learning to manage virtual teams.

"it just comes as experience. So, if you interviewed me in 2009, I would probably [not] have (…) any of these insights as I haven't done it before" (I1)

Not just management experience but travelling and experiencing different cultures is also important and can benefit managers who are expected to take on virtual team members from countries and cultures vastly different to their own.

"I've got experience in different races and cultures and I've been to most of the location that I would look at managing, I've got friends there and I understand the cultural differences really well, just because I've worked there for so long now, that makes it a lot easier." (I3)

Lack of previous experience in managing GVT may cause difficulties

Getting started in managing a virtual team can be tough when, up until that point, the

manager has only been running co-located teams.

> "if I was in a traditional team where we are only at one location and all of a sudden,
> I have to manage a team that global, I might find that a little bit more
> uncomfortable to deal with." (I1)

Without experience, some managers may find themselves in certain problematic situations

and not be able to pin-point the cause or understand how to deal with the problem.

> "You sit there and try and figure out why are you having those-- you won't know,
> (…) So, you'll see the symptoms of all the stuff going on, but you won't be able to
> say the root of the problem is because of that." (I2)

Experience helps to develop leadership styles and skills

Experience allows a virtual manage to build their own style and get to know the different

methods and tools available to enable them.

> "the more experience you have of things that work well personally and things that
> don't work well, that then feeds into how you continue to manage people (…) I
> think, over time and you get to know a few good tools or methods to help the team
> building or the team management." (I4)

The manager below described the temptation to rely too heavily on any team members that

happen to be co-located with the managers. Remote team members will feel left out if the

work isn't shared evenly and local team members will feel overworked.

> "you have to make more of an effort, so, you have to make sure you're inclusive
> and maybe for some people, that doesn't come naturally, they'll look at the local
> team or struggle to communicate effectively" (I6)

Experience helps managers to recognise patterns and warning signs

The more something occurs, especially something negative, the more chances Managers

have to learn how to pre-empt it or even stop it altogether.

> "I think having experience makes it a lot easier to see the warning signs or see
> when stuff is going to work, see when stuff isn't going to work." (I3)

Roadmap suggestions for building expertise in virtual team management

Most managers have pointed out that, though some form of training would be useful 'doing it' is the most reliable method to gain the experience needed to become proficient at virtual team management, and that experience in managing co-located teams is a must.

> "you should manage a team locally first, and then you should go from managing a team locally to managing a global team." (I3)

> "it would be definitely beneficial to do some form of training or development on the differences [between co-located and virtual management] if you're going to do it for the first time (…)I think that can only get you to 60, 70% of their being a strong, effective, remote leader, I think the other 30%, sort of 40 needs to come from self-experience (…) you need to actually do it, it's a very vocational sort of job where you learn a from the experience rather than the classroom." (I4)

While the focus is at different management level, these comments are in line with findings of previous research (Krumm et al., 2016 and Siebdraht et al., 2009) which suggested virtual teams to recruit members from successful members of co-located teams. In general, they all speak for the essential role of experience when working in virtual teams at both management and staff level. The importance of experience in recruitment and selection will be discussed further in the next chapter.

5.2.6 Cultural agility

Understand cultural differences

Cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity are important when managing virtual team members from different countries and different backgrounds.

> "You might inadvertently offend somebody by saying something that's perfectly fine to say in the UK (…) So, you've got to be aware of that and you've got to be comfortable with that (…) you've got to be culturally sensitive." (I1)

Managers should recognise what is important to different virtual team members and tailor their treatment of those team members in accordance.

"cultural differences, appreciating how they work, versus how the local team works, versus how the Romanian team works, there's always cultural differences and expectations and different aspirations I would say as well." (I6)

To enrich their cultural knowledge, managers should make effort to learn about the culture of the remote locations where their team members based.

"you should literally go and read about what the culture is, what's cultural norms, etc. (…) I just think you should read up about the countries where your people work" (I10)

Be able to manage cultural differences in global virtual teams

As a manager of a global virtual teams, it is essential to understand differences around rules and expectations, however, merely being aware of cultural differences is not sufficient. To succeed in global business, managers also need to adapt and respond positively and effectively to different cultural practices and values, something that seems easier said than done. The ability to lead virtual team members through cultural barriers is one of the key skills a global virtual team manager needs to master:

"it's understanding the differences and making sure that people don't sort of negatively judge or struggle to communicate with people from slightly different cultures" (I4)

In a research about virtual teams, Holton (2001) claimed that a team can become truly high-performing once it recognises and uses its diversity. The comments of participants illustrate that global managers who devote time to supporting their team members through cultural differences can make a positive change in employees' attitude and behaviour. As an example, a manager shared how he used The Seven Whys technique to overcome this cultural barrier:

"you ask why seven times to try and get to the root cause (…) I guess you say why did it happen? They go because this file turned up. Okay, fine, why did the file turn up then? Okay, because this team put it there. Why did they put it there, why did they do it this time, not that time? You keep on (…) there is a tendency in Sri Lanka, just to stop at the first why." (I6)

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Another example is the way global virtual managers address the culture of saying "yes" to everything. As discussed earlier, people in some cultures tend to say yes or act positively, even when they don't understand what's been asked of them. In a virtual setting, the manager has less visibility of team members and their work, so it is trickier to spot when this happens. Participants shared some tips to try and handle this issue. For example:

> "as a manager, if you know that somebody is not a hundred percent, (…) you need to qualify and confirm (…) I say, do you understand what we mean? Or are you sure, (…) what's your understanding?" (I10)

Managers need to reassure their team members that nothing bad will happen if they answer "no" to these questions, and to encourage people to be upfront about whether they are coping or not.

> "I mean definitely I would encourage people a bit to say like you know "hang on a minute, you sure?" kind of thing, "you , it's okay to say no", or it's okay to say you need to think about it, that kind of thing" (I5)

Managers should encourage team members to challenge and help them understand that they don't have to give the answer they think people want to hear.

> "As I said really encouraging people to challenge things in Sri Lanka encouraging them to question things, not to kind of try to give an answer they think people want to hear" (I5)

> "You know, we don't want to say yes, we can do something when clearly we can't (…) if you're being asked to do something that's not achievable, that doesn't mean just do your best possible, it means no." (I9)

A participant emphasized that managers need to be flexible in wording, helping people to get more comfortable saying "no", and offer people the opportunity to ask for more information without losing face.

> "… ask them directly and you give that person an opportunity to say "no, that's not clear" (…) or you word it, to say, such and such, do you need a bit more information on that, or is that clear to you? And then that gives them an opportunity to not directly say "no, I don't understand", but you know, ask for some extra information" (I6)

In the section, 'Key Issues and Challenges', working hours or work/life balance is discussed. The examples provided talked about staff from India typically working past 7PM and staff from the US being almost permanently available to work, whereas

Romanian and Bucharest staff are typically very strict about not working outside

contracted hours. Global virtual managers need to understand such differences in their

teams and maintain an agile approach that can accommodate all their team members.

> "you have to kind of understand them and get to know the differences between them and try and sort of organising the teams so that it still fits nicely with people" (I4)

Another example of managing cultural differences can be when team members physically

meet, and clashes occur or behaviours are observed that appear strange to other team

members. Managers need to be ready to respond to and smooth over these incidents.

> "English people go to the kitchen make a cup of tea and come back to their desk and carry on working whereas an Italian will sometimes (…) go to the kitchen 10 minutes before they finish work. (…) I think in the end some people like managers talked to them and said (…) the London teams aren't happy that you're able to take maybe two hours' worth of breaks per day." (I5)

5.2.7 General management skills

Organisational skills

When dealing with geographically dispersed team members a lot of scheduled

communication, travel and work is required. An organisational mindset is a must to stay on

top of all this.

> "I would also say you need to have good organisational skills to juggle the logistics of all of the communication and the travel and the training and work that needs to go on just to keep the teams operating normally." (I4)

> "You need to be a bit more organized to make sure you are communicating. (…) Or at least, you don't have to be super organized, but ensure you're organized enough so certainly one to ones and cascades and communicating effectively, yes." (I6)

> " organisational skill is obviously the key aspect to that." (I9)

Time management skills

For global virtual managers, the days are not simply 9-5. A certain amount of flexibility

and creativity is needed around the time spent at work so that they can stay up to date with

all teams and ensure they're able to communicate regularly.

> "you know you got to have the ability to spend time (…) waking up at stupid
> o'clock time to get to the office for Singapore stand up and then working util stupid
> o'clock because Singapore needs to go online in 6 hours' time and they need all the
> stuff done. (I2)

Agile project management

Global virtual managers must be flexible when delegating tasks. They don't have the

bandwidth to constantly monitor each member of staff throughout the globe and must

therefore trust in the results.

> "it's important if you have a virtual team to have a very good way of delegating
> (…) because they said you can't see what the team are doing. They might be by the
> beach. You know what I mean? (…) but if they're delivering, it's fine." (I10)

The use of various Agile practices which are industry proven can be used, not only to

provide more visibility to managers about the progress of work but to enable the team to

bond and stay together.

> "just by having those rituals that can help the team to form and gel and bond
> because it's always ensures that (..) coming together activities happen on a regular
> basis. (I7)

5.3 Summary

The chapter discussed the key issues and challenges in managing a virtual team, as described by the study participants. The challenges range from simple communication issues such as a crackly phone when trying to talk to a remote employee, to having to understand the legal and cost ramifications of asking team members in certain geographies to stay late and finish work. These challenges are all unique to virtual management and new techniques are required to help navigate virtual managers through them.

Furthermore, the chapter presented a discussion of the core competencies required to manage a virtual team, compiled from statements made by the study participants.

It is clear that managing a virtual team, especially one that is geographically dispersed, requires much more than the traditional management competencies. Even something as simple as listening to an employee requires planning, scheduling, and effort in adapting to different cultural norms and speech patterns.

The common thread, regarding these competencies from most participants, is that they all require experience to hone and perfect them.

Chapter 6: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION

This chapter aims to answer research question Five, which is "how can a practical framework regarding global virtual team management practices be recommended to enhance virtual team performance?" Undoubtedly, global virtual managers are those can provide best practical answer for this question. The following recommendations are primarily based on respondents' suggestions in reviewed with proposals from the available literature and findings discussed above.

It is accepted that, traditionally, the study author would create their own recommendations based on collated input from participant interviews but as discussed earlier in this paper, previous studies in virtual management have tended to focus on student teams who are temporary and do not exactly possess a wealth of management experience. In this study, the author was able to draw on the actual, real-world experience of senior managers who are managing teams virtually at the time of writing and, in some cases, have done so for many years. It makes much more sense, therefore, to let the participants take the lead on recommendations and for the other to interpret and record those in this paper.

6.1 Recruitment and selection

Identify the right person

The first step in building a virtual team is the hiring process (Goodbody, 2005). Virtual managers must think carefully about the kind of person they want in their team. The manager below, for instance, describes a good fit for his team as someone who is interested in moving forward in their career and taking on new tasks and responsibilities.

> "I would take people that are interested and passionate and want to learn (…) I think in general, where you want to hire people, you want to hire where they are going, not where they are (…) I think you can get someone who's fantastic on paper and is really good, but if they're not moving forward, they're no use to me…" (I3)

On the other hand, there may well be managers who want team members that are comfortable with their current role and are not necessarily looking to move forward. If the manager is unable to offer much career progression or the role consists mainly of repetitive work, then hiring somebody who is keen to climb ladders would not be fruitful.

Get the right mixture of people within a team

Previous research (e.g Pelled, Eisenhardt and Xin, 1999; Van Knippenberg, De Dreu and Homan, 2004; Usher, and Barak, 2020) suggests that teams should be diverse. Differences in experience, knowledge and culture all contribute to a healthy, diverse team which means different viewpoints, ideas and suggestions on solving the everyday problems. There may be disagreements but, if the team is clear on the end goal and has a good virtual manager to provide oversight then they will be successful.

> "I think the highest performing teams I've ever worked through, have been when everyone has a shared goal and some shared interest, but they're not all the same." (I3)

Managers must pay attention to the relationships between team members. At least two interviewees pointed out that the goal is not for the team to become best friends, necessarily, but to ensure they're happy and comfortable working together.

> "I want to be able to make sure that the team is gelling (…) they're happy working with each other, they feel comfortable talking to each other and exchanging ideas" (I1)

> "some of the best teams, where people are-- they're not necessarily best friend, but, (…) they're kind of friends and partners like a family." (I3)

Make sure that the candidates have a certain amount of maturity and experience

When members of a virtual team are remote, they can spend long periods free from day-to-day management observation. They benefit from greater flexibility and freedom from many of the constraints of traditional work setting. This means they must be self-motivated

and able to work independently, both things that are more likely to come with maturity and experience.

> "if you're managing a virtual team you need to make sure that your team members have a certain amount of maturity and experience (…) they may not have the maturity to deal with being on their own in a location thousands of miles away from their manager or even fifty miles away from their manager." (I1)

> "it's typically the managers and the team members that we hire all have experienced either working remotely or working with offshore remote resources." (I7)

Note that age is not necessarily a good indicator of experience and, as the manager below puts it, ultimately managers need to interview each candidate carefully and make a judgement call.

> "Well, I can't really say how old are they because that's illegal! But what you look for is a good level of experience working independently and you look at that on their CV and you interview them." (I1)

Make sure that the candidates are interested in the work they are going to do

Motivation is linked to interest and if the work being given to the candidate does not pique their interest, they will become bored and try to find things to do that *will* interest them.

> "And making sure they're interested in the work you're making them do because otherwise they're just going to wander off and do something else and not get their work done." (I1)

Again, this is something managers can only judge during a careful interview. The candidate should be asked about their interests and the kind of work they are looking for. Do their answers match the job specification?

> "What do they want to be and what do they want to do? That kind of thing. If it sounds like they're only applying for this job because they want another one at the firm then no (…) You can work it out by speaking to them." (I1)

Job Description must be clear about any travel requirements

If virtual team members are expected to meet, the job description must clearly state that travel is required and give an indication of how frequently.

> "they also need to make sure they put it in the job description when they're advertising for the role (…) because it might not be convenient for some people (…) they need to be clear on the frequency they're expecting it" (I1)

However, participants also highlight that travel should not be seen as the primary criteria of selection. If, during the selection process, a candidate makes it clear they are unable to travel frequently, managers can still be flexible if the candidate is particularly strong in other areas. This is also discussed later in the section, "Undertake physical visits".

> "if I hire people and they tell me that they are terrified of flying, they're never going to travel, that's totally fine (…) just means we'll focus a bit more on making sure that a number of people visit their sites and get to know them" (I4)

Make sure that the candidates are comfortable speaking the primary business language of the company that employs them.

Generally speaking, it is preferred that all candidates are fluent in the language of the company which will usually be the language for all company employees.

> "make sure that people who are employed within the company have a certain level of English or whatever language, the company chooses as the main language, because I do think, (…) if their competency or language competency is not the same level, it creates issues, because they don't understand." (I10)

Be aware of local employment law

Hiring candidates in another country may present a variety of unexpected complications with regards to their employment laws. For instance, some countries have strict laws about the number of hours employees can work and this could impact plans to introduce overtime.

> "you do need to be aware of what the laws are and how that might impact the support models when people can work and how much overtime, they can do that sort of thing." (I9)

6.2 Build a team identity

It is suggested that building a shared identity can be particularly helpful for distributed teams to develop communications and overcome potential conflicts (Maznevski, 1994; William and O'Reilly, 1998; Mortensen and Hinds, 2001). Topics related to team identity building were raised by most respondents without being prompted. This indicates that, at least to some extent, this issue is one of their biggest concerns. Below are recommendations to foster team identity.

Create a team motto

A team motto or mission statement will keep teams focused on their ultimate purpose and can be drawn on when teams are prioritising their tasks.

> "the team mantra of "my word is my bond" that we all know if we put our name to something, if we say something, we have to do it. (I4)

Shared goals and shared responsibilities

Each team member may be working on their own individual contribution separately and in a different time zone than their colleagues, but they should also be aware that they are contributing to the same common goal.

> "It's about having shared goals, shared responsibilities, we're a team, this is what we're working towards, this is why we're doing it" (I6)

Align individual goals to organisational goals

Individual team members will have their own ideas of what they want to achieve in their role and have their own personal and professional goals. Managers can help team members to achieve these goals by finding ways to align them with the general strategy of the team and, even the company.

"I have senior managers who I listen to and (…) pick up what the direction and the strategy of the firm is generally from them. And I need to make sure that my team is working towards that. There will be their own strategies, their own goals but hopefully they are kind of mixed into the same thing, they are merged the same strategies, basically." (I1)

"by making sure we understand the individual team members and the teams in each location, what their feelings, their thoughts, their intentions for the next year, what they want to work towards (…) so that by achieving the goals of the organisation (…) we also end up working towards the goals and the achievements of what the team members want as well." (I4)

"aligning people's objectives with the kind of the bigger organisation (…) And so, where we can, you know, the local objectives of the resource will help achieve a bigger goal of the organisation." (I9)

Create an open, blame-free learning culture

It's important that failures are treated as lessons and not as opportunities to find blame and that employees feel comfortable asking questions. At some point each team member will make a mistake and require the support of their colleagues to help them fix it.

"it's an open culture, it's not a blame culture, its one where if you ask for help, that's never a negative thing, that that's always a positive thing (…) we don't mind failing, as long as we can prove that we learn from it and we get better" (I4)

Ensure that there is good local leadership in each area

Having a reliable local leader in each remote team is a key factor for collaborative success. Managers often highlight the importance of good local management where applicable. They can rely on local leaders to distribute work and build team morale and these local leaders can act as a bridge between the global managers and remote team members. It is suggested that global virtual managers need to ensure that they clearly define a local team leader or a local go-to person in every location.

"for me, I'll have a designated person who's the known published sort of local team leader (…) that helps with me being able to sort of distribute work (…) to have a sort of a local person to work with, that's definitely a big one." (I4)

6.3 Organise team building activities

Team building activities do not have to be limited to co-located teams. Modern communications tooling enables a variety of events to take place in which each team members can take part despite them being geographically separated.

> "when you don't have the sort of physical contact, I think what you need to do, I think you have to create… you need to incorporate sort of activities." (I10)

Send branded swag and gifts to global virtual team members

Branded swag (Stuff We All Get) such as t-shirts or laptop stickers delivered free of charge to team members can help to promote team identity and encourage the idea that the team has a well-defined place in the firm.

> "…I sound pretty silly, but sending people stuff sometimes works. So, we've had one team before and we sent t-shirts to our remote team over in India (…) doing things like stickers on laptops, where everyone has the same stickers that's branded in the same way, (…) you want people to feel part of a bigger thing (…) that they've got a global identity that they're working towards." (I3)

Online competition (quiz) and events

Friendly competitions between teams help promote an identity and a sense of team 'belonging'.

> "…we have been doing Quiz Trivia (…) and it's an app called Kahoot, which is really good actually. So, you kind of quiz and then you have leaders, and everyone has a glass of wine and 'cheers' (I10)

> "There's a lot of kind of online things that you can do, which was still quite fun. Our Romanian office, they do online quiz nights." (I9)

> "They got Craig David in to do a DJ sets and live streamed it to everyone in the office." (I9)

Virtual hangouts

Chat and video conferencing software can be used to run informal meetings or 'hangouts'. The manager, below, describes multiple social meetings, each with a different subject and even the appointment of 'champions' to publicise the meetings in each subject.

> "One would just be a chat where people could have a drink and have a chat and talk about things. Others would be focused on sports, others would be focused on travel and there'd just be sort of - we would have team members that would champion each social group (…) Those people have a lot stronger sense of a bond with individuals in different locations afterward." (I4)

There could be multiple meetings at different times to fit in with different employee time zones.

> "So, for virtual hangouts, you have it at all times, like this time is London time and next time is New York time convenient. So, everybody has a chance to participate." (I4)

Alternatively, as below, they could even be run during work hours for those colleagues in a different time zone. If management buy-in exists and it's clear this is acceptable to the firm, this can still work.

> "they would be organized and be allowed to run within office hours, because we're a global team, for someone somewhere, it would be out of hours (…) So, yes, sometimes it was within work, and sometimes it is out to work" (I4).

However, one manager did point out the impracticalities of some solutions where the team is particularly large. This provides implications for further improvement on technical enablers.

> "We don't have a global [virtual] bar, because I don't think if you had 80 people on zoom, I don't think that would work, while trying to talk" (I6)

Online fitness boot camp

External companies that provide services such as virtual exercise sessions can be employed to enable employees to get a social break from work, but still provide a structured, team-focused activity.

"Have you heard of Harry's boot camp? (…) you can sign up for a fitness boot camp. So, every day, every Wednesday at a certain time you get 45 minutes of a hit training sessions." (I9)

Off-line events

Teams' can still get together at co-located events if these are arranged in a locations practical enough for all team members to travel there and enough team members are willing to join to make the event worthwhile.

"I've been up and off playing football around Europe, paid for by work (…) I've been to Frankfurt and Madrid where we have [Company Name] football competitions (…) it has enabled us to kind of collaborate with people who we previously would have only kind of met virtually (…) play football with them and have dinner with them. (I9)

For events like this, cost is the obvious limiting factor.

Develop a multidimensional virtual team building framework

Interviews suggested that when working in a global virtual working, team members are usually put in different contexts and have contacts with different departments within the firm, from their teams to local office and other teams at various locations. For example, members of London team will have vertical interaction with their virtual global teams across locations e.g., Sri Lanka, Romania. At the same time, they have horizontal contact with their local community. This gives the researcher a clear indication that virtual team building activities should be multidimensional.

Respondents reported that commonly companies will have a local HR department or business administration teams that will be in charge of social activities at their location. However, it remains the responsibility of virtual managers to ensure their team members are included in local community:

"We got business administration teams in each office and we just make sure they are fully aware of who these guys are, who they work for, and that they are part of

the firm, and they should be included as a part of the office basically, and they generally are." (I1)

"Speaking to HR, making sure people are-- making sure I'm looped into the local representatives. So, if I take Romania as an example, I might have a number of people in Romania who locally are being looked after by somebody. So, I stay in touch with that somebody" (I6)

It is essential that team building activities should make employees feel part of a local community as well as a global team:

"you want them to feel like their team isn't a local team, but their team is-- that they've got a global identity" (I3)
"so, people feel part of a local community as well as a global team. I think there are two factors there" (I6)

While the concept of ""multidimensional virtual team building" could not be identified in the literature reviewed to date, it well suits the reality and the needs of global virtual teams. Further research may attempt to look into this further.

6.4 Develop standard operating procedures

Hunsaker and Hunsaker (2008) argued that in order to achieve a good performance in virtual teams, managers should clearly establish routines and habitual meetings and standard operating procedures. Below are recommendations around this issue, developed based on the in-depth interviews with participants.

Define an agenda for all calls

Conference calls can overrun and drift from their intended subject. Given that conference calls (or video conference calls) are the main method by which virtual teams communicate this can mean a lot of time is wasted. The most common way to prevent this is to clearly define an agenda for the call and stick to it. A block of time can be reserved at the end for any other questions or any other business if really required, but managers should be aware that this time is reserved for high level comments and questions only.

Define a chairperson for each call

Somebody (usually the person who scheduled the call) must act as chairperson to ensure it stays on agenda and on time. Managers must champion a culture in which meeting participants respect a chairperson's directives in meetings.

Regular team meeting

Regular contact with all team members is important. Managers should respect the team member's time zones and, where applicable, host different calls for different teams at different times.

> "we have all of the managers on a dial in call (…) so, we have that once a week and then I have a secondary meeting with the service delivery team, which sits in India (…) but I normally drop into their team meeting, which is once a week as well." (I3)

> "And then at the same time I regular team meeting where we are all together by conference call, and I just go through team update and things like that. "(I1)

> "So, we have a call every single day, at the same time, with the entire team." (I5)

Where possible, calls should be run using video conferencing software so that people can see each other as they talk.

> "always make sure there's a regular video call as well, so you get that visual time together where you can work on team bonding as well as the work that needs to be done" (I4)

One-to-one meeting

Meeting with team members one-to-one gives them a chance to privately air views and concerns to managers. This is also the chance for managers to get more personal and ask how the team members is, check on their well-being and get to know them a little more.

> "We definitely have regular, like weekly one to ones on video (…) just basically a weekly catch-up "(I10)

> "I have regular one-to-one update every month with my team members in New York and it's over video, Slack calls so we can see each other (…) I ask them how

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they are doing, you know, and if everything alright, you know, everything they want to talk about, doesn't matter what it is." (I1)

The manager, below, described a scenario where team members should actually be *discouraged* from using one-to-ones for their own benefit. If they are slightly shy at airing ideas or views in front of the team they are likely to bring these up privately with the manager. In these cases, the manager should push them to voice these same ideas on group chats or during group meetings. The more they are encouraged to do so, the more their confidence will grow.

> "People sometimes are a little bit shy and they, you know, don't want to say things in front of the group. Maybe they want to say one-to-one, you know, so they'll come off the team channel and go onto a one-to-one messenger (…) but just focusing on good practice around collaboration that, you know, you want everyone to work together or chat together on a group… as a group rather than starting offside conversations." (I8)

Regular and frequent catch-up

Managers must ensure they set a regular, frequent and practical agenda of catchups with their virtual team members and, importantly, stick to it as often keeping to the schedule is more difficult than setting the schedule itself.

> "making sure we constantly in touch with them all throughout the day." (I1)

Emergency calls

Emergency calls (or, sometimes, "Escalation" calls) must be defined in the team's process so, in the event of a critical event, each team member knows who to contact, how to contact them and what information they need to exchange during the call.

> "making sure that the people understand when they should be interacting, when they should be communicating, and why, is really, really key to the whole thing." (I3)

Establish processes and tools for self-managing virtual teams

By their very nature, virtual managers need to use a 'hands-off' approach, especially if some of their team members are in a different time zones, so this means setting up empowered, self-governing teams.

> "The successful management of the virtual team is to help the team put the processes in place such as they then don't need as much management." (I7)

> "…it's important that a team can work independently (…) I can't be awake at 02:00 every day to ensure the Singapore team are ploughing through their tasks (..) Setting examples the team can follow independently without having to revert back to me is important." (I1)

Note that management is not the same as direction. The team still needs to be provided with direction and this is the role of their virtual manager.

> "…the team needs direction but I would say that our teams don't need a huge amount of management anymore." (I7)

It takes effort to move a team toward self-management but the rewards are worth it, according the manager interviewed, below.

> "Because you need a lot of justifications and educations and process and training and guidance to put and instill the value of the sort of practices and processes into the team. But once they're established and the team is gelling and executing these practices and processes, well, it's like an engine you know, if the engine is self-tuning at the end of every two weeks' sprint, you don't usually need to step in and rip it out and replace it or upgrade it or do anything" (I7)

Develop transparent process and system to prevent micromanagement

Micromanagement occurs when the manager of a team exerts a large amount of control over every detail of their team's work. The generally agreed effect of this is that progress is hindered, and the team begins to lose any sense of initiative. (White, 2010). Micromanagement is usually due to a lack of real-time visibility of the team's progress or work. Unfortunately, less visibility of team members' day-to-day activities, is a distinctive attribute of virtual teams. However, it is noticeable that participants shared a negative perception towards micromanagement.

"We don't really have a culture of managing people that closely" (I5)

"it's so far away I can't physically watch them. And honestly, I don't really want to, it's not nice to hover over somebody." (I1)

This resonates with Staples et al. (2005) assertion that as virtual team members tend to be geographically dispersed, in some cases thousands of miles from each other, micromanagement becomes exhausting and even impossible.

Participants suggest that implementing an effective management system where leaders can view the movement status of a project can help to prevent micromanagement.

"And I also think you need to manage effectively so you don't micromanage (…) So, you have to kind of put the tasks and the objectives in the way it's a delivery and you know, that this is what they're doing." (I10)

A transparent project management system can create visibility and allow virtual managers to check on progress without seeming overcontrolling. Managers can leave team members to take complete ownership of tasks.

"Obviously when you've got lots of people it's difficult to be that close contact so…, yeah, I'm just saying you know leaving them with the task or an objective and just really let them take ownership of it." (I5)

One of the participants put forward the view that some micromanagement arises due to a manager's own lack of ability.

"micromanagement is a manager's responsibility (…) It's not employees, unless employee is not performing, but it's a different story." (I10)

…and, in some cases, micromanagement occurs simply because the manager is the type of person that likes to retain control.

"Micromanaging, personally, I think it's one of the traces of a character. So, I think there are people who are naturally or instinctively micromanagers, because they don't want to release control." (I10)
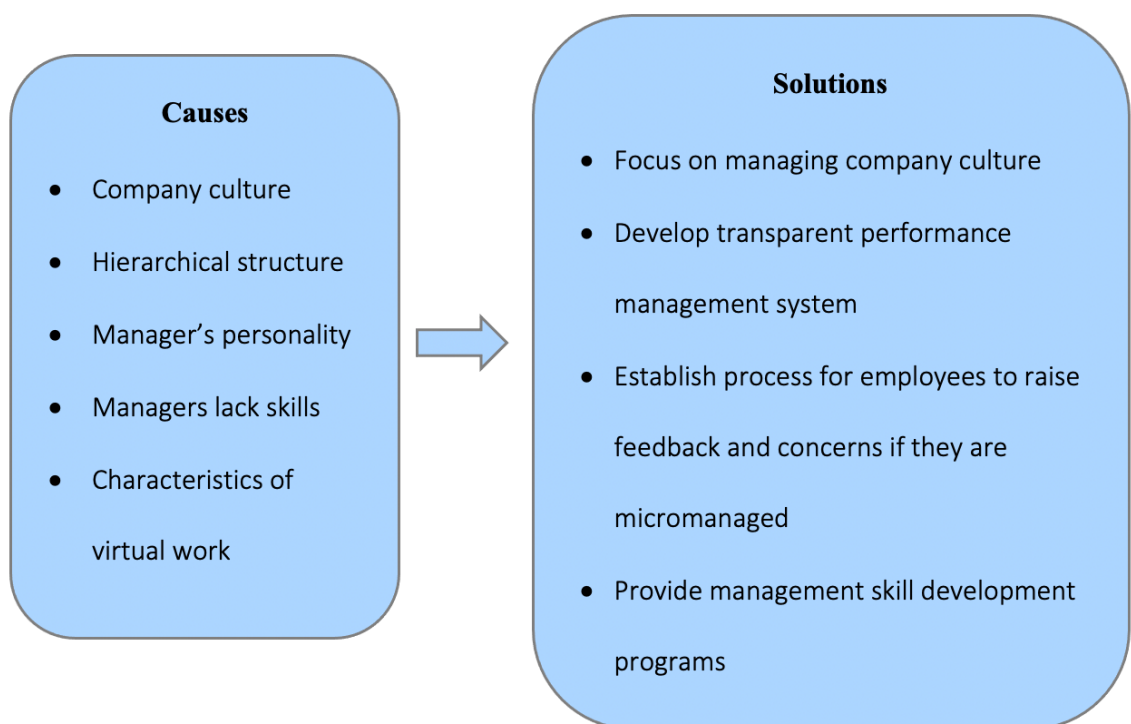
White (2010, p.72) referred to these types of manager as "control freaks", who are fundamentally insecure and afraid to trust the performance of their subordinates. While it is difficult to change someone's personality, training can help to improve skills:

"I think this should be one of the skills that is looked at (…) how you delegate, how you assess your team, depending on where they are, etc. So, I think in some sense it needs to be developed." (I10)

If employees feel they are hindered by an overcontrolling manager, the company should offer recourse for this.

"I think employees should be in a position to say and raise their feedback and concerns, if they're micromanaged, you know what I mean? They can say, look, don't micromanage me" (I10)

Micromanagement: causes and solutions

Causes

- Company culture
- Hierarchical structure
- Manager's personality
- Managers lack skills
- Characteristics of virtual work

Solutions

- Focus on managing company culture
- Develop transparent performance management system
- Establish process for employees to raise feedback and concerns if they are micromanaged
- Provide management skill development programs

Figure 18: Micromanagement causes and solutions

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

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Create a published team charter

A team charter which contains the team's mission, their responsibilities and commitments should be produced and made easily available for team members. It's important, too, that the charter is produced by the team so all have the same level of ownership.

> "it's like a team list of promises or expectation that we as a team, we as individuals in this team expect to be able to do this, expect to be able to say this (…) And it's very much focused on individuals (…) it's more about how we treat each other well to get the best of each other." (I4)

> "some people have different thoughts, different intentions and it might not be clear to everyone what's expected of them (…) if you make it very clear to people what's expected, that resolves, that stops a lot of issues of miscommunication happening really early and really well." (I4)

The charter does not have to be complicated or particularly large, in fact the simpler the better.

> "So, it's sort of having three or four of those kinds of items. And also, not just saying them and publishing them, but it's about living them through every interaction, every incident, every problem..." (I4)

6.5 Learn and respect cultural and contextual difference

Provide cross-cultural training

Since global virtual teams are spread geographically, cross-cultural training becomes important. It helps to improve ability of employees to understand one another's culture, values and ethos.

Cross-cultural training should be delivered not only when the team is initially formed, but regularly, at least one a year. Managers should make it fun, engaging and easy to remember.

> "Training on different cultures is a good start" (I1)

> "we'll sort of providing cross-cultural training for the different team members because that's a very good one that I find really helps" (I4)

> "the training helps upfront and gets people working in the right way" (I4)

> "we're working on the cross-cultural training as a sort of regular thing, not just at the start, but also like a routine." (I4)

The training can combine different forms, according to the team's situation. For instance, online courses, or on-site classroom training. Contents can be adjusted to suit each location and its participants.

> "some online courses, sort of internal training courses, and then also, there'll be some sort of video conferencing together for those. And then for each location, they'll then be physical local training for the local team together, so, they'll sort of do it together as the local group." (I4)

Provide channels to enhance cultural understanding

Firms should provide access to materials and platforms that employees can reference when looking to learn about new cultures. The subjects of these materials do not have to be about work, they can be informal. Materials can also be written by employees keen to share insights into their culture or even presented at informal catch-up video calls.

> "we have an internal intranet (…) and there is a lot of articles, updates from all over different regions and people have a voice and they talk about, you know, like when there is a holiday, if it's a, you know, like Diwali in India or, you know, Chinese New Year, etc." (I10)

Provide training in local employment law and practices

Managers must be made fully aware of the employment law in their virtual team member's country, including government sanctioned public holidays. When a manager produces schedules for work or project timelines and costings, they should not have to make assumptions about their employee's availability and cost.

> "So, if we talk about Romanian employment law if you do more than your quota of hours a week, then automatically you get double time" (I9)

6.6 Effective communication

Cultivate a culture of open communication

Openness promotes team inclusivity and enhances team spirit. Each person in the team must feel confident in asking for their colleagues help even if they have made a mistake. It is important that the team can operate in a blame-free environment.

> "when the odd issue does come up, then yes, we're very open about it (…) get everyone involved, to be open, to learn about it, and then move forward and that has worked very well so far." (I4)

It is important that managers understand that autonomy does not mean each team member is on their own. Team autonomy applies to the team as a whole and encourages them to ask questions of each other and discuss things openly without needing the manager to constantly step-in and act as a referee.

> "The most important thing for [Company Name] for any of the virtual teams is that autonomy, but also encouraging people to ask questions. If you don't ask questions or you're not sure you either were a genius in which case your output will show it, or you're the wrong fit for our company." (I7)

Open communication does not necessarily mean a 'free-for-all' either. When it comes to virtual teams that are geographically dispersed, communication does need some sort of structure.

> "Having a structure and a routine for the team is important. So, for example, establishing like a cadence around having daily meetings or maybe that's too often, (…) it just depends on the nature of the team." (I8)

Of course, it is not in the nature of some cultures to freely ask questions or admit they are struggling with workloads. Tools can help with this.

> "you try and use some tools to keep track of velocity, keep track of task management at least in the beginning so that you can assess whether or not people have understood" (I7)

Develop informal social channels

Teams need to release pressure every so often, to socialise informally throughout the day. Co-located teams can do this by the watercooler or the coffee machine, but virtual teams must stick to online methods.

Private, informal channels can be set-up alongside work-oriented formal ones for teams to socialise throughout the day. It is important, though, that team members are made aware these channels are not exempt from any company harassment policy just because they are informal and that chats are likely to be recorded.

> "we got our own private support channel that I run and that's just support team, nobody else is allowed on it, so we can talk, and joke (…) it's nothing controversial (…) people are free to go on there and moan if they want to, and blow off some steam" (I1)

> "in all the remote teams I've worked on, we've also had a replacement for that whole conversation that people have around the traditional one is around the water cooler (…) So, for example, having an LOL channel where people can put funny pictures and not be worried about people saying well, that's not professional (…) and people can interact as human beings and start to build friendship, professional friendships through that" (I8)

> "having a channel where you can talk rubbish with your work colleagues is actually productive. You can tell pretty soon if people are spending too much of their day on that…" (I8)

Ensure team members are proactive in communicating

When team members are not sitting in-front of each other, more effort has to be made in communicating. Bad habits, such as the 'fire-and-forget' email must be eradicated.

> "They will send an email and then the next person [from the follwing shift] picks it up [then will] wait until the end of their working day and then sends a response and we get a whole… another day passes (…) each exchange of information requiring an entire day in order to happen" (I8)

In virtual teams, time zone overlap can magnify this issue. Global virtual managers need to prevent and address this problem effectively, ensuring team members are taking a proactive approach in collaboration.

"they're working with people on a time zone, and they have two hours overlap but they need to prioritize that collaboration („,) avoid those issues where, you know, you have to wait an entire day for a unit of progress (...) that can really damage productivity." (I8)

6.7 Organise effective virtual meetings

Virtual teams usually only communicate with each other during virtual meetings, so it is critical that these meetings are carefully organised and managed. During interviews a number of issues became apparent with virtual meetings such as overrunning time, participants secretly multi-tasking and late-comers disrupting meeting flow. Participants offered advice on trying to combat some of these issues.

Be aware of time zones and be sympathetic when setting up meetings

It isuggested that when setting up meetings, managers need to be aware of time zones and being sympathetic to people's schedules.

> "[in the] Middle East, they don't work on Fridays, [their] weekend is Friday, Saturday." (I10)

> "it depends on working practices I mean, five o'clock on Friday is obviously different to five o'clock on a Monday, but it just depends on working culture (…) it's just about knowing your colleagues and working with them and communicating properly." (I8)

Set out a clear structure and stick to it

Virtual meetings should follow a simple structure with goals and objectives clearly defined so all team members know what to expect.

> "most important is to have a very structured call (…) It has to have an agenda (…) if you send an invite, there['s] an agenda in the invite. (…) It's objective of the call, that's what we need" (I10)

> "at the start of when you're talking to someone, telling them what they're going to learn, and telling them what you're going to do and setting out in a very simple structure…" (I3)

"Everyone sticks to the agenda. And if there is another kind of, you know, sometimes you have this sort of discussion, you can say, okay, we continue this discussion, but then we have another call for other points or we take it another call - you know, offline. And then we still continue with what we planned." (I10)

Consider scheduling shorter calls

One of the biggest complaints about virtual meetings is how long they last.

"I have calls sometimes that are one and a half, two hours. So how can you be effective when you sit for two hours?" (I10)

The most commonly used scheduling software (e.g. Microsoft Outlook or Google Calendar) will set default meeting lengths to half an hour, a default length that takes a number of clicks to change.

"I think one of the things that I'd be (…) interested [in] if you change the default meeting time to be 25 minutes or 20 minutes (…) I think actually, most meetings don't need to be half an hour" (I3)

Encourage participants to read before starting meetings

The manager, below, describes his firm's novel way of ensuring all attended to a meeting are fully briefed.

"if you want to have a discussion, you write down on two A4 sides what you're going to discuss (…) and the first 5 minutes is everyone just silently reading, so, everyone in silence all reads together what you've written and then you discuss it." (I3)

Turn video on during conference calls (and managers should lead by example)

For most video conferencing software enabling the camera is optional and some attendees can be reluctant to switch it on but using video can enhance conference calls.

"Enforce cameras on all virtual conference calls. It's important that each person can be seen so that facial expressions and gesticulations are visible" (I1)

"I think your behaviour changes when you think people can see you, you pay more attention, definitely (I3)

There are some suspicions that people avoid using video because they're actually 'chilling out on their sofa" (I5, p.9) and if that person goes on mute, too, then you have no feedback as to whether they are engaged on the call, or not.

> "people just go on mute and you just don't know what's happened" (I5)

It takes a critical mass of attendees before everyone is comfortable turning their camera on.

> "I don't mind doing video but if I'm like the only one or two then not." (I5)

Another senior manager agreed with this.

> "most of our calls are obviously video, and initially there was resistance, because people felt very conscious. Now it's second nature, it doesn't matter" (I10)

Video allows people to take in facial cues which leads to more accurate interpretations and even friendlier conversations.

> "there are some team members who are more outspoken (…) when we had calls with no video, it was coming across much harsher. (…) They still don't agree for example or get frustrat[ed], but it's not as, it's softer, you know what I mean? It doesn't come across as so aggressive. (I10)

Video also prevents people from multi-tasking and, therefore, losing concentration during the meeting.

> "when you're on the video, you can't really multi-task as much. Well, you still can, but not as much, because people can see that you are not listening." (I10)

Using more visual communication tools

Traditional whiteboarding is tricky on video conference calls, but not impossible if the camera is set-up correctly, however modern video conferencing tools will often contain simple diagramming utilities.

> "I'm a very visual thinker (…) I've found a good diagramming app for my iPad, so, I can diagram on my iPad and it comes up right on the screen, which is quite good (I3)

Make sure everyone speaks in virtual meetings

A lot of the time more assertive attendees can dominate a meeting. Managers should think

up ways to ensure that all attendees can speak. The manager, below, describes a technique

he used to ensure that meetings did not all consist of the same voices.

> "we make a real effort to make sure everyone speaks (…) we've been trying to use
> (…) wheel of names, as weird as it sounds, whereby we randomize the first
> speaker." (I3)

Managers can find subtle ways of testing to see how engaged attendees were during the

meeting.

> "at the end of a meeting make sure that people say, what are the next-- what do you
> think are the next steps [name]? And then [name] will read me back what he thinks
> he needs to do next." (I3)

Requesting feedback is also a way of determining how well the attendees understood the

meeting while allowing them to save face.

> "I'll leave the call by being, you know, what can I do to help you? And that's often
> when they state that they haven't really understood it" (I3)

Provide opportunities to ask questions

During virtual meetings the moderator should keep things interactive by asking questions

and encouraging attendees to share their opinions.

> "… make the meeting as interactive as possible, so people have to pay attention.
> Ask questions, ask for suggestions, ask other people to talk for a few minutes." (I1,
> p.39)

Meeting minutes

Recording minutes and making them available for all team members can ensure everyone

is on the same page about the results of the meeting and any actions.

> "it is always good to kind of have minutes from a meeting and allow people to kind
> of come back on that.". (I9)

It also allows attendees to catch-up on the meeting and review anything they missed or did

not understand.

> "so, you get that clarification on what was discussed, what was agreed. And also, anyone who wasn't part of that meeting can catch up as well." (I9)

Provide training courses for online meeting skills

Interviewees reported that employees tend to lack of online meeting skills. For instance,

meeting hosts sometimes don't provide any opportunity for attendees to prepare for the

meeting, and this profoundly affects the quality of meetings.

> "people think meetings should be like a TV show, as weird as it sounds, so, people think that you should go, you should show the a document and this document should have a surprise like a TV show-- but it shouldn't, that's not what we're trying to do, we are trying to convey information (…) and the structure for conveying and presenting information is very different to the structure for creative writing, and I don't think people ever get told that" (I3)

All employees are expected to attend virtual meetings, but it's rare that they are actually

provided with training on how to get the best out of video conference calls. As online

meetings act as a backbone for virtual team's performance, it is essential to provide

training courses for online meeting skills.

> "…there should be a skill that all the employees should be taught how to do an effective online meeting or an online call." (I10)

6.8 Undertake physical visists

Managers must make time to visit their remote team members to meet them face-to-face

and spend time with them in their own environment.

> "I went to Sri Lanka twice, at the start of the-- end of last year, star of this year. I went to Romania, some of the DBAs [Database Administrators] went to Romania and Sri Lanka. So, you can kind of build some teamwork that way". (I6)

> "trying to get as much face-to-face contact as possible. So, the management trips twice a year or it's common for new starts if they want to travel..." (I4)

Managers should visit all remote locations at least once a year

Travel is an important part of global virtual team management. This helps to bolster their otherwise long-distance relationship and contributes to team inclusivity."

> "we're trying to overcome all of the differences of being remotely located and feeling included as part of a single team. So, for us, we're always looking at travel." (I4)

Team members should be encouraged to travel and meet their remote colleagues

Some participants also agreed that it was important for individual team members to be able to work side-by-side with their remote colleagues.

> "there's always one or two team members that will be on secondment, so, they'll be traveling to other and working at other locations for like a month" (I4)

> "at least once a year, teams are flown to London for a group get together over a couple of days with brainstorming sessions, training and socialising." (I1)

Team members have a chance to get know their colleagues more and see what it's like to work in this other location.

> "that works really well for us, getting that, that face-to-face time (…) then you can continue over the video, email, voice, etcetera." (I4)

Consider personal circumstance and willingness to travel

Some people are keen travellers and the opportunity to travel may be considered a perk of their job, but other people may not be so keen and may be reluctant to leave family for extended periods or simply don't like to fly.

Managers should not force their team members to travel. This would be detrimental to their happiness and, ultimately, their productivity. They may even leave the firm. There are also compromises available such as keeping the duration of trips noticeably short or otherwise suited to personal circumstances.

"sometimes, it could be that we'll consider doing a week or 2 weeks maximum, just like a small trip over and if they want to do that instead (…) but it's not super regular, it's just once every couple of years" (I4)

"We don't enforce it, it's for those that want to (…) we'll just sort of still keep working on other ways just to get to know them better." (I4)

6.9 Motivate virtual team members

Without frequent, daily contact, it can be difficult to motivate remote team members or even gauge how motivated they are, so how can managers ensure remote employees feel motivated in their roles?

Allow time for personal development and team building

Managers should permit employees time to work toward their own, individual goals or by let them take part in some group activity.

> "individual should be allowed to spend a certain amount of time on their personal development and on some team-building development." (I4)

Play to the strengths of the team

Team members are motivated when they're given challenging work that plays to their strengths. Managers who focus too much on trying to improve weaknesses risk their team losing interest and becoming frustrated.

> "Sri Lanka is more of an operational team, (…) whereas in London and in America (…) the resources were a lot more technical and sort of higher-skilled, (…) so they'd be doing the more complex architecture" (I4)

> "We tend to focus more on the plus points and the stronger points of teams, rather than focusing too much on you're not very good at this, you need to do this better, (…) certainly not the number one focus, is kind of just looking at the weak points." (I4)

Flexibility in working hours

Virtual managers must move away from the nine-to-five mentality and allow team members the freedom to adjust their working hours as they see fit. This especially applies to remote teams who may, occasionally, need to join calls or meetings scheduled outside their time zone.

> "if someone said right, we're working remotely but everyone's got to be at their desk between eight o'clock and five o'clock no failures, and you're only allowed half an hour for lunch, then people could get pissed off with that and that's going to impact morale." (I8)

> "I used to work American hours because the UK hours didn't make so much sense, there's a much better overlap with the Americans (…) but if they've said no, you're based in Europe, you have to work these stupid hours when there's no overlap with my colleagues, that would have been a de-motivational center." (I8)

Compensation

As one of the core components of a human resource system, compensation is seen as a powerful motivator (Zobal, 1998; Lawler, 2000l; Pauleen, 2003b; Gagné and Fores, 2008). Participants suggested that financial motivation remains important for virtual team members and managers. This is an essential area to which organisations using virtual work need to pay attention.

> "So, if you as an organisation, you're saying, are you a remote worker? So, we're going to pay you less, that would suck. That would not motivate people at all." (I8)

> "Obviously, financial motivation is maintained through overtime and that sort of thing." (I9)

> "It tends to be the fact that they have a job and money is the primary motivation." (I7)

However, it is also noted that other non-monetary elements also play a vital role in motivation:

> "pay people more, they're going to be happy but it's not the only one and you can pay people a lot of money and they're still going to be miserable if they hate their job and they hate their colleagues." (I8)

Recognition

Recognising each team member's contribution, regardless of where they're situated, is critical for motivation. Managers need to make time for this when dealing with remote teams because the 'watercooler' conversations where they can drop in a casual 'thank you' don't occur.

> "I always make sure I say, thank you. And I'm always putting senior management (…) you know, make sure you give a shout out to these guys because they've gone above and beyond (…) So even that kind of mentioned gratitude, then, you know, it does make people feel better." (I9)

Get the right work to the right person

People are motivated when they are given work that plays to their strengths and interests.

> "make sure that people enjoy what they're doing and how they're doing it." (I8)

> "…if you're giving people work that they enjoy, they like doing it, if you give people horrible jobs, they hate [it] (…) So, it's important that everyone enjoys what they do. (I8)

Career progression

Most team members will have ambitions beyond their current role and want awareness they are making progress in their career. They must all be offered equal chances at career progression and managers must try not to subconsciously focus on promoting local team members who are more visible.

> "career progression is normal, but you've got to be a lot hotter on it because it's easier to forget it when you're remote" (I8)

> "…remote workers need to see that they have that career progression both in, you know, in achievement and position so that they've got opportunities to move up through the company as well." (I8)

Offer travel

Travelling to visit remote workers in far-off countries will be seen as a perk by some employees. Where possible, it should be offered.

> "… people tend to like travel, especially over in India, I think they-- there's definitely a lot of Indian folks who like the idea of coming over to the UK" (I3)

> "it is a perk for some people to get to go out to these locations and it would be nice to be able to send them to sit and work in a different location – you know – and I think that would boost their motivation." (I1)

6.10 Monitor and evaluate virtual team performance

Outcome-based performance system

As participants suggested, an outcome-based performance system is more suitable for virtual teams. This dovetails with earlier remarks regarding a virtual manager's difficulty in constantly monitoring remote team members' work. Often the outcome is the only result which can be judged.

> "outcome led is key to just live and work in general (…) it's not about the hours you're in the office, it's about the quality." (I3)

> "…the whole agile methodology is to focus on the outcome rather than the activity (…) it doesn't matter if you're on perm or remote, everything should be tracked back to output rather than just activities…" (I7)

Delegate performance reviews to local team leads while global managers remain decision-makers

Where possible, remote managers should delegate a good portion of their performance reviews to local leads who will have a better idea of the employee's attitude, behaviour and attention to work. They should, at least, seek feedback from local senior people who are observing the team members regularly, even if those people are not necessarily in the team member's reporting line.

"I'm ultimately responsible for it, but I delegate to my local team leads (…) performance reviews will be based on a combination of what the local leads have put together (…) and then (…) for about 10% update for myself as my own interactions with the team members. And so, it's mostly done by the local team leads and I'm just there to balance it across all of the locations, make sure it's an equal level". (I4)

Consider cultural differences in performance management

Some cultures take performance reviews and feedback sessions very seriously, whereas others prefer a much more casual approach. Managers should be aware of the expectations their employees have when it comes to delivering performance appraisals and, even, ad hoc feedback.

"…for example, some cultures like very regular, very sort of informal catch-up performance reviews or just regular one to ones. Where some other cultures (…) they just like once a month maximum kind of catch up which is a lot more sort of formal." (I4)

"… Some cultures like to be told what to do, other cultures like to be asked, to be invited to help with the work (…) it can be so very important to some people how words are phrased."(I4)

6.11 Build trust

When a good portion of a virtual managers team is in a different location and, in some cases, time zone, trust becomes critical. As discussed previously, the virtual manager is unable to constantly observe remote team members working but must still rely on them to deliver toward the team's goals. For some managers this can be a tricky situation to get used to.

"if you lose the trust, then also the collaboration fails and the communication fails, the feedback fails and the team falls apart, so trust is really key." (I10)

Trust comes up often when asking participants for key insights into managing virtual teams.

"trust is a very important one for me,(…) trust is sort of a big one and because without trust people either act differently, sort of don't help each other as much as they could or miss out on great help." (I4)

> "A high-trust team is a very, very effective group, I think people that don't trust each other just don't work. (I3)

Foster transparency and accountability

Bachman et al. (2015) suggested that teams that foster transparency and accountability tend to have a deeper understanding of their work and its associated impact, and this helps to build trust.

In the framework of this study, participants asserted that by facilitating accountability and providing transparent information, team members more fully understand their objectives, tasks and deadlines, enabling them to work autonomously and with complete ownership. At the same time, though, virtual managers must ensure a framework is in place to ensure team members are accountable and can receive regular feedback for their work.

It's possible to provide teams with high levels of autonomy and still have visibility of what they are doing on a daily basis by using various methods and tools such as regularly scheduled 'catch-up' comms provided by the team members themselves or the ticketing system used to track their work. Participants also shared other, more informal ways of gaining insight into the progress of their team:

> "if they don't attend the daily call for a couple of days in a row then clearly something's wrong. They're probably avoiding it because they, you know, they're not doing their work, and at that point, you know, you need to go talk to them and see..., see what's going on." (I5)

On a larger scale, it is advised to provide virtual team members with the bigger picture of their project. Ensure they are aware how their own tasks fit into the project as a whole and, in turn, how the project itself fits into the company's mission. Team members that focus only on their own tasks may become isolated and find it difficult to see how their own work relates to everyone else's.

> "make sure that they understand the bigger picture of why it works." (I3)

"We have like a.., a weekly delivery meeting with all the senior stakeholders (…) and every week they know the feedback from that meeting goes out to the team, so they can sort of see where they fit into the bigger picture (…) I think helps to motivate people to kind of come together as a team and see that they're delivering one thing rather than lots of individual different things." (I5)

"try and celebrate the successes, you have to make sure that people see other locations as being the ones that did it" (I3)

Based on these in-depth interviews with participants, the researcher created a model to foster transparency and accountability, presented as below:
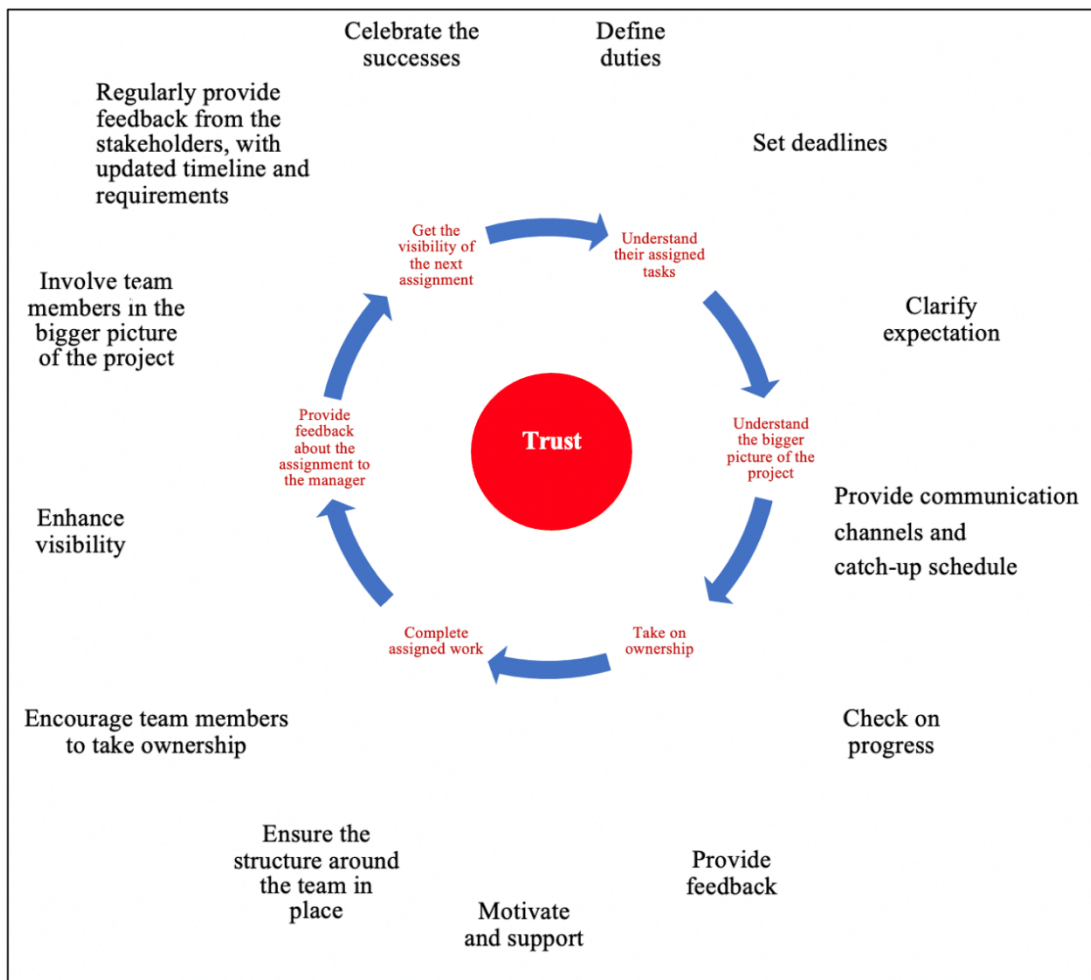
Figure 19: Foster transparency and accountability to build trust

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

Trust lies at the heart of this model, while the outer circle shows the activities of virtual managers, and the inner circle shows the activities of team members. The managers facilitate accountability and provide transparent information and a supportive system to their team members. Team members understand their assigned tasks, the bigger picture of the project and they can take on ownership of their work. Ultimately trust can be built up when both sides perform their roles.

Be honest

If trust is seen as willingness to accept vulnerability base on positive expectations about another's intentions or behaviours (Mayer et al., 1995) then it also requires a high level of honesty and a blame-free environment, especially in situations where people have to take responsibility for mistakes:

> "if (…) you've caused that mistake, if you're in live service, then all of a sudden, you're going to get a lot of people looking at trying to find the cause of that failure. So, you need to be open honest, right from the get-go. Otherwise, you're going to waste a lot of people's time. They might be going off on wild goose chases. So, you put your hand up and then you fix it. You've got to own up to it. So that's why you need trust" (I9)

It is widely accepted that honesty is a key dimension of trust (Ganesan and Hess, 1997; Fisman and Khanna, 1999). During interviews, most participants also described honesty as a big part of building trust within the teams.

> "acting with integrity, being honest" (I3)

> "…honesty is one of the also principal ways that trust is built and if there's no honesty, then trust fails straight away." (I8)

> "Honesty is an absolute huge important part of this. So would I say integrity, honesty and trust." (I7)

In short, to build trust, managers need to foster a culture of honesty in virtual teams.

Enhance opportunities for collaborative effort

Managers should structure assignments in such a way that it encourages team members to work together. For example, splitting large tasks into sub-tasks so each team member gets a decent share of the work with the sub-tasks either assigned to team members directly or left to take on themselves as they see fit. The overall task then becomes the team's common goal with the sub-tasks as easily quantifiable individual contributions.

> "putting them together regularly on projects, where they have to work together and they have to depend on each other and trust each other" (I4)

> "If you align people I guess, you all feel like you're working together as a team towards something (…) then you can build trust as well. Clear goals, I guess." (I6)

Treat employees equally, with care and respect

Treating employees equally is usually something discussed within the context of culture, gender, or language differences, but global managers must make sure each employee feels equal within the context of the virtual team itself. They must promote a feeling of inclusivity, that each team member is a valid and equally important part of the team.

> "I have to work really hard just to let Sri Lanka know (…) we can't do this without you (…) just gets them sort of working together, to try and make them more on an equal level..." (I4)

> "So, everyone-- we need to feel equally important in this virtual team." (I6)

It takes a lot of effort for virtual managers to get this message of equal importance across to remote team members, but it is critical to gaining trust. Social psychological research directly associates respect to social identity and group-oriented behaviour (Davis, 1966; McFarland and Buehler, 1995; Sleebos et al., 2006). By treating employees with care and respect and by demonstrating how important they are to the team's mission, leaders can gain an increased trust (Thau et al., 2007). The following comments illustrate this viewpoint:

> "respect is another aspect of that builds trust. So, if you had a team member or manager who was not showing respect to their colleagues, then the trust would disappear pretty quickly." (I10)

A manager demonstrating a lack of respect for team members can quickly lose the team's trust. They should remember that their team members are people and not simply resources or 'tools'.

> "genuinely caring about your people is really key. Making sure you see people, no matter who they are, where they are, you see them as human beings and the same as you (…) I think people forget that everyone's a person, they have the same hopes and fears and dreams, I think that's a massive thing" (I3)

Build rapport with team members

Building rapport is trickier with virtual teams because there are few chances for casual communication. Nevertheless, participants suggested that having honest and frank conversations will help build strong rapport between managers and their team members, not matter where they are located. This will, in turn, build trust.

> "I think if you're open with people, and they're open back with you, you build trust, (…) you can be open and frank and have a frank conversation about work or other people or how things are going. And you can open up about your feelings about how things are going, then you're effectively sharing and building trust that way" (I6)

Maximise communication and, where possible, face-to-face contact

Generally, participants described a pattern of over-communication when it comes to their virtual teams. As have been mentioned before, there is little to no casual contact between managers and remote teams, so conscious effort must be made by the manager to ensure they are communicating with all team members so they can build those relationships.

> "lots of regular chats, regular catch-ups, asking how their life is, yes, slowly, is the honest answer." (I3)

> "it is a lot easier once you've had some face-to-face contact, which is why I'd always sort of getting out to all the offices twice a year, to make sure that I've at least seen everyone in person." (I4)

6.12 Review the use of technical enablers for global virtual teams

Technical enablers for global virtual teams

When it comes to virtual teams, "lots of it is about leveraging those kinds of collaboration and communication tools to glue the team together" (I5, p.2). Throughout the interviews, managers provided a list of technical tools currently being used in global virtual team.

Communication enablers	Email, Slack, WebEx, iPad, Microsoft Teams, Webcam, Skype, Telephone, Voice calls, Facetime, WhatsApp, Video calls, Big TVs and cameras, Zoom Future: Augmented Reality in business, Virtual Reality, Multi-user whiteboard
Collaboration enablers	Confluence, Jira, Cutover.com, Trello Boards, Atlassian Stack, Bitbucket
Performance management enablers	Namely, Workday

Table 9: Technical enablers for global virtual teams

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

Before discussing in detail, the statement below from an interviewee can help the readers to generate an overall view about the use of most common tools in global virtual teams:

> "Skype, and Teams for a chat and then email (…) everyone's communicating on email all the time." (I6)

Evaluate the effectiveness of technical enablers

Several commercially available communication tools were mentioned during participant interviews. The table below lists each of those tools along with various opinions or points of information from the participants.

Tool	Evaluation	Statements
Email	Often used as the default communication tool	"I think it's used by most companies as the default work, scheduling, and management method" (I3)
	Information in emails is easily forgotten	"…we avoid at all costs using email for communication because information in emails is easily forgotten (…) the information in those emails just goes into a black hole and it's lost forever" (I5)
	Email volume can be prohibitive to work	"I get huge amounts of email (…) I think email is quite an inefficient way of managing work." (I3) "I've got usually got about 10,000 unread emails, it's crazy ridiculous -- it's getting better, it's moving away from email more to chat, but it's still very email dependent" (I6) "it's very difficult to focus on stuff if you're constantly bombarded by the next email." (I6)
	Email content does not integrate easily with other tools	"it's very difficult to get an email to go into a ticket, to go into a piece of work, I don't think there's enough integration" (I3)
	Writing an email can take more time than using phone or chat	"It actually takes longer to write an email and describe the problem than it does to either pick up the phone" (I7)
	Emails are often sent to too many people	"I'm included in CC, on so many emails, I just go and delete without even thinking about reading, I mean, I've set it up now, so, if it's to me, it comes up having a different colour, so, I can spot the ones that are directed at me, and all the others I pretty much just go and delete." (I6) "the problem with email is you can send it to 50 people and then [they are] included that conversation, do they all need to be included in that conversation?" (I6)
Microsoft Teams (chat software)	Microsoft Teams is heavily used and becoming popular	"I'll use Microsoft teams relatively heavily as a kind of instant messaging chat application." (I3) "I mean we're the-- so, [Name] is the world's largest user of Microsoft Teams, we've got 600,000 people that use it" (I3) "Microsoft Teams is busy trying to take over the world and succeeding in lots of ways" (I8)
	Generally, Teams is a highly rated too.	"Teams will be the best, Microsoft Teams" (I6) "We use Teams a lot, absolutely loves this app. I think it's very good" (I10)
Slack (chat software & Microsoft Teams competitor)	Slack permits private and public communication split into channels	"But you have lots of different channels that are for different subjects (…) or you can have just firm channels – firm-wide channels" (I1)
	Slack also permits video conferencing	"Slack, I forgot to mention – also has video conferencing so you can use your webcam." (I1)
	Useful for quick non-visual chats	"Slack, would be used for instant messaging" (I4)

		"Slack is obviously a very strong one" (I8) "Slack is everywhere in the firm." (I1) "So, the thing used most is Slack" (I1)
	Slack is a popular choice	
WebEx (video conferencing software)	WebEx can be used for pre-scheduled meetings	"if I want to arrange a meeting, I go onto my WebEx account and I set a time and a date – whatever – and I invite these people. Click 'go' and it sends out a link (…) – it's a virtual room" (I1)
Voice Call	Quick and Easy	"voice calls are sort of quick and easy that everyone could be using between the team in different locations," (I4)
Video Call	Improves understanding and helps with team bonding	"the problem with email is you can send it to 50 people and then [they are] included that conversation, do they all need to be included in that conversation?" (I6) "it's not as good as face-to-face, but it is good still to get there." (I4) "always make sure there's a regular video call as well, so you get that visual time together." (I4) "doing things like video calls I think clearly helps. I think seeing people face to face and understanding them being human, I think is a good thing" (I3)
WebCam	Can visually check if people are in the office.	"So, we've worked once with a very large UK bank (…) they put a webcam over the area, so, you could at least see if people were in the office (…) actually just seeing there's an area people, what they're doing, is sometimes helpful." (I3)
TV's available in the office and meeting rooms	Camera focus changes depending on who's speaking.	"we have virtual conferencing technology like big Tvs and cameras that zoom into the people that are talking and things like that um which are pretty useful" (I2)
Jira (ticketing software)	Create tickets and track issues	"there is the ticketing system we use for support called Jira (…) you are presented with a screen and you type in your problem (…) You click save, you've got a ticket ..." (I1) "We tend to use JIRA as a ticket tracking..." (I10)
Confluence	Shared document repository	"I write a document and I put it onto Confluence, and anyone can change it. (…) Very much more public (…) it's more like a website that's there but you can change it and edit it and it's unique to your firm." (I1) "you can get alerted on Confluence (…) if someone changes a particular document" (I1) "we use Confluence to track readiness" (I9) "In addition, we'd be using a sort of collaborative sharing software like Confluence" (I4)

Table 10: Some thoughts about future technical enablers for global virtual team

(Source: Author's own work, 2021)

Virtual reality

Team members could be situated at a virtual desk next to digital avatars of their colleagues where they interact with them as if they were seated next to each other.

> "the physical feeling of doing some work, picking it up, doing it (..) sticking it on the 'done' pile, there's something to that (…) it'll be interesting to see if some of the advances in virtual reality (…) if that has an impact around it" (I3)

Augmented reality in business.

One of the recent advances in entertainment software has been augmented reality in which, special glasses are used so digital assets can be drawn into the user's field of vision. Advances in this technology could mean digitally drawing the avatar of a colleague seated at the desk opposite even though they're thousands of miles away.

> "in augmented reality the room's still there but (…) the digital things are put in on top of the room so it looks as if there is something in the room with you. So, look, there's a chair opposite me that's empty but if I'm in a conference call with someone in New York what I could do is put some glasses on and see the person sitting there digitally" (I1)

Multi-user whiteboard

White boards can dominate physical meetings, but some participants pointed out that there isn't, yet, a decent digital replacement for virtual meetings.

> "…the challenge I find lingering is there isn't a particularly good multi-user whiteboard experience (I3)

Issues in the use of communication tools

Lack of spending on communication tools

Companies often resist spending on communication tools or even on researching communication tools.

> "And I do genuinely think the companies don't spend enough money on the tooling and the equipment that's needed behind remote work." (I3)

People tend to use default settings on all communication tools

Modern communication tools are highly configurable with many options available. Despite this, most of the time, these options are left at on their defaults. The time isn't taken to investigate them.

> "I think it's weird, one of the other massive issues I have, and I'm sure I can do a time and motion study (…) is people tend to use the default on all of these tools." (I3)

People are often unsure who should be included on communications

Digital communication makes it very easy to include people. Often people can be unsure who to include and will default to as many people as possible.

> "they don't know when it's beneficial to include someone when it's not" (I3)

People tend to be nervous when they email senior person

Emailing a senior person can be intimidating and people tend to overcommunicate when they do this.

> "People get nervous to email me because they see me as this really senior person (…) they write these really long emails that just say nothing (…) you don't have to give me this long thing" (I3)

People don't know how to use communication tools properly

Ultimately, training is not really given on the soft-skill of how to communicate effectively through these tools.

> "no one ever explains to someone how to use email. (…) I think the majority of people don't ask and I think there's not enough (…) [it's taken] for granted that everyone knows how to use email, but I don't think they do"(I3)

People don't know how to choose an appropriate communication tool

Choosing the right tool for the right message can be critical if team members want a decent response. Unfortunately, according to the manager below, people often make the wrong choice.

> "people don't know when you should email people, they don't know when you should use instant messenger" (I3)

6.13 Selection of physical locations to recruit virtual team members

Participants suggested a number of factors affecting the choice of locations for recruitment of global virtual team members. They are the popularity of English, the location of the organisation's head office, local tax policy and technology infrastructure.

> **Criteria for selecting physical locations to recruit virtual team members**
>
> • The popularity of the company main business language
> • The location of organisation's head office
> • Technology infrastructure
> • Local tax policy
> • The availability of skillset

The popularity of the company main business language

If a majority of the company speaks English, then it makes sense that remote employees should speak English too.

> "the language of business is English, and Singapore is a big business place, so they all speak English over there, same in New York and, obviously, London." (I1)

The location of the organisation's offices

The location of the company's various offices will often determine where recruitment is carried out as it means the new team members have a physical office they can go to for work.

> "Simply because that's where their offices are (…) If they opened an office in Vietnam, then they would employ people in Vietnam." (I1)

> "We could have done Hong Kong but we didn't have an office in Hong Kong. I think we would have had offices in either Hong Kong or Singapore and it was Singapore, so we went with that." (I1)

Technology infrastructure

Technology infrastructure is seen as a key enabler and a principal requirement for global virtual work setting.

"So, technology is enabling this set up." (I10)

"You've got a lot of reliance on your infrastructure" (I9)

The interviews highlighted the fact that some areas on the Earth still struggle to afford the most basic level of technology: electricity. In some countries, the unstability of technology infrastructure can come from poverty and crime.

"So, they'll dig up the cables and sell them, and then the connections would be down." (I6)

The comment below suggested further research to look into efforts of multinational companies on improving local technology infrastructure.

"We had one of the villagers, we randomly realised that people, they didn't have electricity all the time, so, we arranged an electricity generator to be shipped to this tiny village in India because they would only have electricity like 4 hours a day, it's unbelievable" (I3)

Local tax policy

Local tax policy can also determine location. Some countries may appear to have prohibitive tax regimes but, on looking closer, may also have designated certain areas benefiting from lower tax responsibilities.

"there is this concept of a special economic zone, so, lots of the large buildings that we built in Bangalore, Mumbai, and those locations, all locations are allocated special economic zones, which the Indian government has basically allowed a lower tax to be put against. So-- and you can only have that lower tax if you are physically sitting in that building." (I3)

The availability of skillset

There is no point hiring in locations where the skills required are not available or expensive unless there is a particularly good reason. Managers must research the availability of their required skills in their preferred location.

> "in Europe, we're able to hire really good technical resources that in certain technologies aren't available, for example, in London. So, it allows us to find resources around the world that don't have to be in London." (I4)

To sum up, organisations might find the list of criteria in selecting the physical locations to recruit members for global virtual teams useful. Local governments also can use this to actively review their policy in education (e.g. teaching English), investment attraction, tax and technology infrastructure

6.14 Summary

In this chapter several recommendations were made for building a framework to help managers succeed in virtual management. The framework is made up from a number of simple and practical activities and techniques, all based on the considerable experience of the study participants. While it is clear, from previous chapters, that managing a virtual team can be a challenge, it is also clear that there are ways to mitigate this challenge and the framework in this chapter should provide a solid foundation for virtual managers and set them up for success in virtual management.

In addition, the chapter also described two additional subjects that arose during the participants interviews. The first is the use of the various communication and workflow tools available to virtual teams and their perception by the study participants. The second was around various factors that should be considered when deciding where to locate remote employees in the first place. Although these groups of issues don't relate to management and core management competencies per se, all study participants had strong opinions about these subjects, so they were included in this chapter.

Chapter 7: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents discussions around the contributions and limitations of this study, as well as possible recommendations for future research.

7.1 Conclusion on the result

The researcher hopes to have contributed to existing literature and achieved their stated aim, which was to explore practices and experiences of managers in managing global virtual teams and to highlight areas of good practices as well as areas of improvement. Regarding research question One, "what are business drivers for global virtual management?", according to the study participants, there are a variety of reasons for global virtual teams, including 24 hour, follow-the-sun service and locating highly skilled, cost-efficient resources.

For research question Two, which is "what is different about managing a global virtual team?", the research work provides an intensive discussion on the differences in managing virtual teams from 'traditional', co-located teams. Respondents suggested that the skills in managing a virtual team are not dramatically different from those required to manage a co-located team. Bad management, however, may have more detrimental effects in a virtual setting.

In order to address research question Three, "what are the key issues and challenges that managers in the London FinTech industry faced with when managing global virtual teams?", and research question Four, which is "what are the competencies that managers need to be effective in the virtual world?", the research presented key issues and challenges in managing global virtual teams, explored lived experiences and good practices of virtual managers, and identified core competencies required to succeed in managing a virtual team.

Finally, the Fifth research question, "how can a practical framework regarding global virtual team management practices be recommended to enhance virtual team performance?" was addressed. A set of recommendations to help managers when managing virtual teams was developed based on actual, real-world experience of senior managers, which also makes the case for appreciating the voice of people with lived experiences.

Managing virtual teams is still a new discipline but, in light of the recent 2020 pandemic, with enforced working from home policies, and continued mass globalisation, it is a discipline set to become more significant and the hope is that virtual managers of the future and, even researchers of the future, can benefit from this paper.

7.2 Contributions to the body of knowledge

Virtual teams are an important work structure in FinTech. However, little is known about what constitutes effective successful management of a global virtual FinTech team. This research addressed an important yet under-researched area regarding management practices in global virtual FinTech teams. Overall, the work provides important information for FinTech organisations and those interested in developing virtual team management skills.

In summary, this research contributes to the body of knowledge in six ways:

First, as the first effort in the United Kingdom researching global virtual team management in the FinTech industry, the present study has contributed towards filling the gap and provided useful insights into the research topic.

Second, a FinTech historical development timeline was created to provide readers with a quick, visual summary of the evolution of the industry.

Third, the present research provides useful insights into the reality of managing global virtual teams based on lived experiences of senior FinTech managers. This makes a significant difference to the existing literature, where most studies (e.g. Zhang et al., 2009;

Iorio and Taylor; 2015) were based on small student teams working together for two to fifteen weeks (Saunders and Ahuja, 2006) and hence some questions were not applicable for corporate virtual teams (Zhang et al., 2009). This research sheds light into a niche area, showing the everyday reality of managing a global virtual team in the London FinTech industry.

Presently, virtualness is being incorporated into co-located teams at a fast pace. Therefore, suggestions from this research might be useful for a wide population of readers, and not limited to managers of established virtual teams nor FinTech industry.

Fourth, the present research contributes a timely volume of knowledge in cultural diversity understanding, which might appeal to practitioners and scholars in fields such as Management Sociology, Urban Studies, Ethnicity Studies, Human Geography and Migration Studies.

Although culture was not seen as the primary focus of the study, issues related to cultural diversity kept emerging through shared thoughts of interviewees. From major topics such as differences in leadership styles, living and working styles to smaller issues like how employees around the world spend their break time differently have been discussed. With many years of experience in managing global virtual teams and travelling around the world, participants of this research have become experts in one or many aspects of intercultural communication and provided practical insights into cultural diversity. Countries and geographic areas mentioned including APAC, Asian, Europe, Eastern Europe, South Africa, Middle East, Australia, France, Singapore, America, Latvia, Sri Lanka, India, Israeli, Italy, Bangalore, Malaysia, New Zealand, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam.

Fifth, the research investigated six areas in global virtual management that are merely mentioned in the literature. For example:

i.   Past research just discussed the issue of reducing external environment-related risk as a business driver for global virtual teams.

ii. Cost-saving is commonly viewed as a key driver for virtual teams. However, not many studies provide clear numbers around cost saving. This research has shed the light on this issue to a certain degree, and further provided discussion on sources of extra costs for running global virtual teams.

iii. The present research proposed virtual team managers to develop a "multidimensional virtual team building framework". This is a practical concept that has not been identified in the current literature.

iv. With practical discussions such as "automation and the loss of cost benefit" and "criteria for selecting physical locations to recruit virtual team members", the research provides useful insights for policy makers and practitioners at national and city level. Business and researchers may also find these insights useful for directing their future work around global virtual working.

v. Some management models have been developed based on lived experiences of global virtual managers: "Micromanagement: causes and solutions", "Foster transparency and accountability to build trust"

vi. Most research limits their focus to a few issues only, this research covered a wide area and helped readers gain a good understanding about global virtual management.

Last, but not least, as mentioned in literature review, most tools and technologies listed in current virtual team literature are outdated. Some recent articles mention several newer technologies but they're not discussed in detail. With focus on the FinTech industry, a tech pioneering industry with excellent investment resources and the common use of virtual teams, this study has approached some of the best materials to investigate tools used to mitigate challenges faced by virtual teams. In total, the study examines over twenty technical tools and systematically organised them into three categories.

The findings from this research are useful to a number of people, for example:

- Tech developers can treat this study as a source of information to review what their competitors are doing better, and to gain an understanding of the features that users are in need of or wish to have. They can find useful information about areas to improve, opportunities and implications for designing new tools and technologies that better support virtual teams

- Academics can use this study as a window to the world of practice systematically and realistically.

- Virtual managers, especially new virtual managers, may find this helpful when deciding which tools to use and how to use them.

- Financially, the reviews of virtual team technical enablers can help business to save cost by limiting the use of ineffective tools and considering better options.

In addition, some thoughts about future technical enablers for virtual teams were also discussed by participants.

7.3 Limitations of the current research

One of the major limitations of this research is that the sample population was relatively small. In addition, nine out of ten participants were male and only one participant female. However, while the latter reflects the massive gender imbalance in the London FinTech industry, it should be noted that interviewees are mostly senior-level managers, and each in-depth interview was conducted over a period of approximately an hour on average. The limitations of participant quantity are understood. That said, this study should still be of value to the FinTech industry and global virtual work community. Its findings provide useful insights and unique contributions, especially when it was the first effort in the United Kingdom towards global virtual team management in the FinTech industry.

The project was carried out among the Covid-10 pandemic and interviews had to switch from face-to-face to video calls. This method had all the disadvantages of virtual meetings such as technology breakdown and background noise, however, it re-created the virtual work environment of the participants and helped them to mirror and recall their experiences of working with virtual teams.

This research focused on London FinTech firms and many of them are owned by global organisations, and their employees tend to have first-hand experience of working in remote settings. This may have affected the viewpoints of respondents and how they interpret challenges and manage them. Therefore, the findings and recommendations might not be a "one size fits all" for every contexts and industries.

Other potential limitations of research work and future research directions include:

- It may be difficult to find senior-level personnel willing to participate.

- It may take time to set-up interviews as high-ranked managers are busy.

- Virtual interviews may be interrupted for many reasons (e.g. technical breakdown), thus the interviewer and interviewee might have to discuss plan alternative means of communication.

- Participants may not be willing to share the practices of the company due to concerns about violating a non-disclosure policy.

- The selected candidates may not reflect or represent the general population of an industry or a geographic area.

- Depending on the amount of information collected, it may require a great deal of time to process data before moving to the next interview, which can lead to further costs and constraints for future research.

7.4 Possible recommendations for future research directions

Like many studies, this research work is without limitations. Based on the data in this research and the conclusion drawn, the recommendations for future relevant research topics are set out as below:

First, as this research work is the first effort in the United Kingdom towards global virtual team management in the FinTech industry, not to say using grounded theory, future research may consider following this direction to fill the gap in the literature and may want to expand the current research to other industries and other countries. A larger sample size may be needed for a better generalisation of the outcomes.

Second, researchers may want to build a literature review that compares findings of virtual research based on experienced experts and those based on temporal student teams to see the similarities and differences.

Third, when discussing whether virtual teams can be seen as a cost-saving solution, some participants used words such as "perceived cost-saving", "illusion", "that's not always the drive". This opens up interesting questions that future research could look into.

Fourth, future research may shed light into latest technical enablers for global virtual teams: the use, the costs (fees, infrastructure and maintenance expenditures) and effectiveness as well as skills required to operate them.

Finally, the research revealed negative impacts of lengthy meetings. This finding provides useful insight for future research directions. For example, additional studies could make greater efforts in investigating counterproductive interaction in virtual meetings specifically, and what is the perfect length for virtual meetings.

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Appendix A: List of all findings

Finding No.	Content
Business drivers for global virtual teams	
1	Follow the sun, access to global talent pool, enhance global presence and reduce external environment-related risks are seen as primary operational drivers for global virtual management.
2	Covid-19 pandemic is considered as a contextual driver for virtual working.
3	Cost-saving and productivity seem to be primary financial drivers for global virtual management
4	In general, most virtual managers reported that the top business drivers for the global teams are to enable a 'follow-the-sun' working model and access to global talent pool. Cost-saving is secondary to these factors.
Further discussion about cost-saving as a business driver for global virtual teams	
5	It is suggested that human resources in some locations tend to be lower skilled and initial savings can disappear in the long-term due to the extra work required to oversee these teams.
6	It is suggested that hiring in less skilled locations may mean hiring more people to do the same job.
7	More management needed to monitor quality of the work being performed.
8	Firms use virtual working may find they need to invest more in travel, training and development for virtual team members
9	It seems virtual teams have to face extra cost due to loss of quality when hiring employees in less skilled locations.
10	Virtual managers revealed that the cost of hiring virtual teams is not limited to their salary. Local employment law such as overtime may make the cost go up.
11	Virtual managers raised questions of whether cost-saving in running virtual teams is just an illusion.
12	It is suggested that the more prevalent automation becomes then the less requirement for manual work and the cost benefit for outsourcing manual work is lost.
What is different about managing a global virtual team?	
13	Virtual managers confirmed managing a virtual team requires standard management skills, but impact of bad management will be magnified.
14	Global virtual teams lack of face to face from the first step of the employment cycle and that happen in everyday activities.
15	Virtual teams rely on technology to communicate and cooperate.
16	Overall, virtual managers find more difficulties, more complexities, more workload when managing a virtual team.

Key issues and challenges in managing a global virtual team	
Challenges in employment law and practices	
17	In FinTech industry, virtual team members tend to have experience of collaborating with people based in different location, different time zones and different cultures.
18	Virtual teams encounter significant challenges in employment law and practices.
Key issues and challenges in communication	
19	Lack of the visual or auditory cues negatively affects team emotional authenticity and team trust.
20	It takes longer to resolve business problem in virtual teams due to lack of face-to-face.
21	Virtual team management involves excessive and formal communication.
22	Most virtual managers experience communication overload, but they find it necessary to do it.
23	Virtual managers fear of insufficient communication.
24	There is a massive inefficiency in default meeting length. In particular, most people tend to set default meeting time to 30 minutes, longer than needed.
25	Overall, participants disfavour multi-tasking.
26	Too many calls on the agenda and team members do not have enough communication outside of meetings are some reasons of multi-tasking.
27	People tend to not share small problems in one-to-one meetings.
28	Virtual managers find it challenging when they have to respond and interpret different people from different culture in the same meeting.
29	Information sometimes gets lost during translation in virtual meetings, but some people tend to not ask when they don't understand, and as a result the issues pile up and cause further problems.
30	Non-native English-speaking virtual team members struggle understanding people with heavy accent.
31	In a virtual team environment, culture seems to have an impact on the way people generate an interpretation of an utterance.
Cultural differences	
32	Different cultures have different styles of communication, and these different styles can result in confusion over email communication in virtual teams.
33	Openness in admitting issues can vary between cultures. Some cultures prefer to remain opaque and fix them in private without revealing anything about the issues or the solutions they've implemented.
34	Problem approach can vary between cultures. Some cultures believe that problems can be solved by applying more people, some cultures think problems should be solved with less people and more technology.
35	When it comes to having the confidence to ask questions, cultural differences play an important role.
36	Virtual managers acknowledged team members from different cultures have different preferences in voicing disagreement.

37	Virtual managers find it difficult to help team members understand cultural difference in social distancing.
38	Woking hours and approaches to work-life balance can be vary between cultures.
39	Attitudes to work breaks and lunchtimes can differ from culture to culture. virtual managers should respect them if they want a productive team.
40	Virtual managers perceived differences in speech etiquette and mannerism between cultures.
41	Virtual managers aware cultural differences in the way people socialise and build relationship.
Key issues and challenges in team building	
42	Virtual managers considered team building challenging as many spontaneous interactions are difficult to recreate virtually.
43	Team building activities can be costly and must be scheduled.
44	Virtual managers reported having less oversight on team activities.
45	As virtual managers have less oversight of team inference, virtual team members are vulnerable to requests for work coming from local managers, which they find difficult to refuse.
46	Sometimes virtual managers may find they have less ownership over recruitment, progression and remuneration for their team members.
Key issues and challenges in building trust	
47	Most virtual managers acknowledged that trust is essential and valuable.
48	Virtual teams rely heavily on task-based trust, of which accountability stands at the centre.
49	Trust is a journey over time. Initial trust exists, but trust still needs to be built, and it takes longer with a virtual team.
50	Virtual managers faced particular difficulties to build trust in virtual teams without the benefits of face-to-face contacts. These difficulties are mainly caused by lack of face-to-face interactions, less oversight, less ownership and also cultural differences.
51	Virtual team members need more altruistic trust and affective bond trust from their managers.
52	Differences in values may cause misunderstanding, and ultimately affect trust.
53	Understanding each other's personal values, behaviours and what behinds behaviours is crucial for virtual teams to build trust. Without these, trust can be eroded and cause problematic issues.
54	A breach of trust can negatively affect communication and work outcomes in virtual teams.
Time zone problem	
55	It is challenging to set up meetings in virtual teams due to time zone difference.
56	Both virtual managers and team members faced significant challenges due to time differences. For managers it is work/life balance, for team members it is concerns about disturbing managers at unsociable hours.

	Technology-related problem
57	Virtual team experience difficulties dealing with background noise in virtual meetings.
58	Virtual managers complained that companies do not invest enough on the tooling and the equipment that's needed behind virtual work.
59	The quality of communication between teams can also be dependent on the quality of communications infrastructure in countries.
60	There is a need for technical communication tools that have the capacity to deal with the larger number of participants than the available ones.
61	Virtual teams tend to use different version of tools or different tools altogether for two main reasons. Firstly, when the quality of communication is deficient, other tools must be available. Secondly, when technology is replaced, it can be challenging to roll out the replacement to all teams simultaneously.
	Problem regarding oversea travel
62	When it comes to team members travelling to other locations, family ties are normally the biggest restriction.
63	Virtual managers concern about long-haul flights, jetlag and busy schedule when travel abroad.
64	Firms do not always make their travel policy clear, and, in some cases, the policy does not exist for or apply to certain parts of the firm.
65	While the cost of travel and accommodation in different geographies is unavoidable, some companies, more than others, must keep a tight rein on these costs.
	Further discussion about benefits of physical visiting local offices
66	Virtual mangers suggested a number of benefits of physical visiting local office in mentoring, motivating, building rapport, enhancing their understanding about team members and cultural differences.

Appendix B: Transcripts of interviews

LIST OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview number 1

Type of interview: Face-to-face interview

Date: 1 May 2019

Location: London

Duration: 01:21:82

Job title of the interviewee: Head of Support

Gender: Male

Age range: 40-50

Team size: 10 people (based in London, Singapore, and New York)

Size of company: 400 people

Type of business: Enterprise Software Development

Global virtual management experience: 10 years

Interviewer: Firstly, I'd like to ask you for some general background on your organisation. So, what type of business is it?

Interviewee: It's called [Company Name] and it's a technology business. They've written a blockchain platform. And it's not really intended… Oh It was originally designed to be targeted at the financial business areas, so they're based in the city in London. So, it was originally a way for banks to use blockchain without having to sacrifice a lot of privacy issues that you do with traditional blockchain like Ethereum, but they since realised that it's not just banks and things but insurance, medicine, teaching, educational companies… And so, I guess the business you call it software, blockchain software business. They call it middleware. They build a software platform for other businesses.

Interviewer: How about the size of the business?

Interviewee: It's only a start-up still. Well, I say it's a start-up but it's going now since 2016 in its current form. Number of employees only maybe about 150 to 200, and most of

those appear in the last year, so it's going rapidly in the last year. Before then I think less than a hundred certainly.

Interviewer: Do you know about their turnover?

Interviewee: No, but I don't know if I can find out. The problem is might not be publicly available because they're a start-up, they use investment money at the moment and they did turn some revenue yesterday…ah, yesterday, last year… but I don't know how much.

Interviewer: Where does it operate from?

Interviewee: Operates from city of London. Well, actually sorry, it's based in New York, so it is incorporated in New York but most of it, all the development and product building are done in London, but they have offices in New York and Singapore.

> **Commented [Author1]:** Company information

Interviewer: I'd like to ask some information about the background on virtual management arrangement at your company. So, the first question is what does "global virtual team" means to you?

Interviewee: To me it means you run a team and you have members of that team not just in one physical location, one geography. You have them spread throughout different physical locations. In my case I have team members based in London, Singapore and New York. And so, it's truly global because they're all in different countries, global virtual team. And that means I have to manage the team through software tools, like Slack, which is an internet app, email, video conferencing, things like that because I'm rarely out in front, physically in front of the guys. A few of them have come to London so we met and worked with them but majority of the management of the team is done using information technology tools, basically. And so that's where the virtual comes from.

> **Commented [Author2]:** Managing geographically dispersed team members through various collaborative communication technologies

> **Commented [Author3]:** Lack of face-to-face

Interviewer: What do you understand by the term virtual management?

Interviewee: Kind of, I guess, similar question, so virtual management to me is managing a team virtually, which means managing a team using technology as opposed to traditional management techniques, where you're physically in front of somebody and you face to face with them. You have to do it over things like Emails, Slack, Video Conferencing. It's a little less personal basically.

> **Commented [Author4]:** Managing geographically dispersed team members through various collaborative communication technologies

Interviewer: Oh, you must be an expert in this field. The answers are all very good.

Interviewee: Maybe I am… (smile)… I work with global teams… (his voice turned a bit higher) … When I was at a Stock Exchange, I worked a lot with people in Sri Lanka and Italy, but I didn't run a team. And again, when I went to MA, I used to do a lot of work with people based in New York, but now I run a team at [Company Name].

> **Commented [Author5]:** Experience

Interviewer: So, you've worked in virtual teams for a long time so far?

Interviewee: Yeah, I think since that Stock Exchange really, cos I was running the operation support team there but all my team members at that point were in London so in

one location, but I work with an operation support team based in Sri Lanka and an operation support team based in Italy.

Interviewer: From which year?

Interviewee: It was about 2009.

Interviewer: So, you have experience as a member of a virtual team as well as being a virtual manager?

Interviewee: Yes., exactly. And I suppose it makes it a little bit… I don't know if easy the right word, but more comfortable than if I was in a traditional team where we are only at one location and all of a sudden, I have to manage a team that global, I might find that a little bit more uncomfortable to deal with.

Interviewer: Do you feel more comfortable to manage a global virtual team rather than traditional team?

Interviewee: Oh, I don't know actually. Well, it's interesting, cos managing a virtual team gives you a certain amount of distance… (laughs loudly) … which could be seen as a good and bad thing.

So, one is a good thing because it means that you have more time and space to think about your decision or to be a bit more… to calm down when something really annoys you … (laugh loudly) …

Bad thing is it's not… you can't really… it's a little bit more… you have to really, really, really trust them that they are going to do their work that assigned to them.

And you also have to trust that anybody else around them in that location who isn't necessarily part of the team is "not going to give them work that they shouldn't be doing but then they feel they should do it cos it's senior person etc. You know, you don't have that level of control over the work they are doing.

Interviewer: I see, let's talk about trust. What does trust mean to you in your working environment?

Interviewee: Trust... Hm, so for me, in my team it's more about are they working towards the team's goal and therefore the firm's goal basically.

Interviewer: The right direction, you meant?

Interviewee: Exactly what I meant. So, I have senior managers who I listen to and I meet them regularly, so I pick up what the direction and the strategy of the firm is generally from them. And I need to make sure that my team is working towards that. There will be

their own strategies, their own goals but hopefully they are kind of mixed into the same thing, they are merged the same strategies, basically. So that's what. And in order to do that… because it's so far away I can't physically watch them. And honestly, I don't really want to, it's not nice to hover over somebody. You have to trust that they are taking whatever guidance you are giving them and using it, and that their focus is on that, as opposed to, say, you know, listen to somebody else asking them to do something, or whatever. I guess trust is, yeah, they can get on with it, without needing somebody around just to keep make sure they are on track.

Interviewer: So, what do you think about trust in virtual teams compared to local teams?

Interviewee: I think you need more trust in virtual teams than local teams because you are just not there, you are not in front of them, making sure they are doing the right thing. And I guess they need more trust as well at their side, they need to make sure I am representing them properly at the firm. If anything goes wrong, I am not blaming them behind their back… (laugh loudly) … Not just saying "oh yeah, it's Jeff's fault". So, they need to trust me and that whereas I guess if you face-to-face, if you physically with the team there are lots of other communication methods, maybe not aware of that will let them know whether you are… just think of body languages stuff, you don't see body languages, let's say if I am in bad mood or I am upset or I am angry or something they can't see it so… (laughs) they kind of have to trust that I'm doing the right thing and I have to trust that they are doing the right thing.

Interviewer: So, we have three concepts here. Managers need to trust that their staff are doing their work, need to trust them doing the right thing, and need to trust that they are working towards the team's goal and the firm's goal?

Interviewee: When I said, "are they doing the right thing", I meant the right work. So, are they turning up on time, are they sitting at their desk, doing their contract allowed, you know, actually doing their work?

And then you got to "are they doing the right work", and that is basically are they doing work that they should be doing in the context of their team purpose. So, if they are in a development team, or a programming team, are they writing a software, are they programming, or have they decided rather they do something else and not do that. So, that's what I meant by doing the right work.

And then, lastly you got the idea of are they doing work that reflects the team's goal and the firm's goal. So, by that they might be turning up on time, may be doing work, they may

Commented [Author12]: Align individual goals to organisational goals

Commented [Author13]: Develop transparent process and system to prevent micromanagement

Commented [Author14]: Role performance trust

Commented [Author15]: It is harder to build trust in virtual teams

Commented [Author16]: Virtual team members need more altruistic trust and affective bond trust from their managers

be doing as far as the manager concerned the right work, but is what the manager concerned the right work in line with the firm?

Interviewer: So, it's mainly about trusts each other, do the right thing?

Interviewee: Yes! Yes!

Interviewer: So, is it different from trust in local teams?

Interviewee: Yeah, it's simply because if I come in one morning and I am really angry as something happened over night and it should've not happened, or it went to the wrong people and now in a mess and I've got to burn my resource to fix it and I am annoyed. But then one of my team says, "how is everything, are you okay?" then I just go "yes" (…stressed his voice…) but they can see I am really tense, or I end up angry, they know that I am… err… that something seriously wrong. You know, my body language gives it away unless I am a really good actor, and so they can see it with their own eyes and they can tell, they don't need necessarily to trust that I am telling them everything is right, and it is.

Whilst in virtually, the only way they can ask me that really is by contacting me over Slack, or the messaging system or email. And then email is an email, you can't really see body language or you can tell tone so I just can send them back a nice "yes, I am fine, don't worry" but in the mean time I can be absolutely trashing them to management saying that "yes their fault, they messed it up" but they got no idea so they need to be able to trust me more than if they are in front of me.

Interviewer: How about relationship between team members? The way you build relationship between local teams and virtual teams, is it different? For example, in local team you hang out for drinks, you socialise more?

Interviewee: Exactly. And other thing, of course, is the cultural aspect. So, if you are global team, the way people work, even in New York is different from the way in London, and especially in Singapore the way they work is different as well. And the laws are different, so I can't… In New York their job is their life and being called at 10 o'clock at night for work in New York is par for the course for lots of them. In London that's not really the case. You have to put specific people on call and say, you know, you might be called out of this and they agree to do it. And a lot of time there is compensation for it, you know, you are on call. In New York it's actually just standard. You give the company your own phone number, so you have to accommodate that as well.

And cultural difference things like people make jokes and things like that. In London as well, building relationship is strengthened over going for drinks, that's a very European British thing. They don't do lots of boozing in New York in the way people do in London, so you have to find other things to socialise around, things like that… (…laughs…)

Yeah, and you know, it's time difference as well, of course.

Interviewer: How to build relationship within virtual teams?

Interviewee: Well, I have regular one-to-one update every month with my team members in New York and it's over video, Slack calls so we can see each other. You know, it's not just emails or whatever, and I ask them how they are doing, you know, and if everything alright, you know, everything they want to talk about, doesn't matter what it is. And then at the same time I regular team meeting where we are all together by conference call, and I just go through team update and things like that.

And when they started, they all came to London for two weeks and sat with the development teams, things like that, and sat with my team, well with us, just to sort of meet everybody. Because lots of the technology, the Head of Technology is all based in London, they have to meet them as well. And that's really the only thing we do apart from making sure we constantly in touch with them all throughout the day.

But then, we, you know, my firm uses Slack, Slack is everywhere in the firm. And then we got our own private support channel that I run and that's just support team, nobody else is allowed on it, so we can talk, and joke and make, you know... "ah this guy again" that's kind of things… yeah… it's nothing controversial about it, no swearing or things like that, but yeah people in support team are free to go on there and moan if they want to, and blow off some steam: "can believe this happen again, why...etc"…

I guess this building relationship between the guys is trickier cos you are not in front of them, and everything has to be scheduled as well. So, if they are all together in one team, and all sit by your desk, you get to half past five or six o'clock whatever you can just say to all of them "you know what, you fancy a beer?" and you know, you're out, you have a drink. It's really spontaneous and easier, whereas if they are global you have to schedule specific point a head, especially for things like Xmas party and stuff. My firm doesn't do it, but I know some firms will fly people to the location specifically for Xmas party. I know one guy of my last firm at MA, he left and went to work for a company based in Spain, but he's based in London, and they fly him to Spain to the Xmas party every year. So, the things like that. It sounds great but also that kind of things cost a lot of money and

have to be pre-scheduled. He can't, it's not like you can sit with a group of colleagues and say, "fancy a beer?" and that's it they go out and have a good evening, you know?

Interviewer: Do you have friends from colleagues in local teams?

Interviewee: Yes. I think I still keep in touch with, yeah, definitely. Not necessarily my team… the teams that we work closely with. Because since 2009 I was running a team, so I was a team lead, and it's quite difficult to be mate with people who work for you. I think it's doesn't really happen much. You tend to make friend with people who run similar teams next to you, cos then… I don't know why… but I do know why… I guess it's strange to friend with your boss cos it's difficult to… But that's not to say I am not friendly with members of my team. I still see them occasionally but we're not, I don't regularly meet them for drinks in the same way I do… you know, some of my friends...

Interviewer: In which way it will be different with virtual teams?

Interviewee: Well, we never meet really, that's the thing, so unless they specifically come to our location or I specifically go to their location, we never, it never happens.

And so, one of the things we try to make sure in my current role is that the boys in New York and Singapore are involved in that office. So the office there is a little bit smaller as well but we make sure the business admin teams running that office include them in a lot of stuff, cos there are a lot of social stuff goes on at [Company Name]. And we just make sure that they are part of the office basically. So, we focus on them being, I guess... They work in my team but they are part of the New York office, and they feel more social in that context.

Interviewer: Because they can feel isolated, cos they work for you and they don't really have a colleague over there?

Interviewee: No, they don't actually. Most of all technology people based in London. A couple of technology people out there who work for different teams. They mostly in New York, they mostly kind of salespeople and marketing.

Interviewer: Have you ever heard your team members complain about those kinds of things?

Interviewee: Not really. They've not really said anything. One thing also that certainly one of them, I think both of them worked in previous places where their management was in different locations. So, they kind of experiencing that. Maybe they get used to it, so I wonder what a new person who never has that before.

Interviewer: Some research mentions that if you have first-hand experiences of working in virtual team it is easier for you, whilst if it's your first experience then it's more difficult?

Interviewee: Yeah, and we need to aware of as they would need more assistance on boarding into the team.

Interviewer: You said that you try to engage your virtual team members to their local office, how do you do that?

Interviewee: I don't need to do it, but what we do is before they join we just make sure…We got business administration teams in each office and we just make sure they are fully aware of who these guys are, who they work for, and that they are part of the firm, and they should be included as a part of the office basically, and they generally are.

I am not generally aware of any specific social activities in the New York office for instance, but I make sure that my team would be invited by checking with the business administration teams who generally arrange company social activities.

And it's not even just me who does it, it is still my boss as well. My boss travels a lot between offices, so he will go over and he makes sure they are part of the firm.

> **Commented [Author32]:** Develop a multidimensional virtual team building framework

I haven't been allowed to go out yet.

Interviewer: Why?

Interviewee: Don't know (… laughs…). I am trying to get out there. Again, it's interesting but a little bit awkward as well as I want to go out to New York and Singapore simply to sit with my guys for a week or two weeks, so I can find out exactly who is out there talking to them, giving them pressure, and things that make them find difficult to themselves they don't need to do. I want to go out there, watch and sit with them. But then there is a kind of hesitation to keep demanding it because you don't want people to think I just want to go to New York, or I just want to go to Singapore (laughs)… And so I guess to keep bringing up just sounds like you want a jolly off to a location, even … basically, I've been to New York before, and from what I've heard Singapore is basically Canary Wharf, only with hot weather (laughs). So, you know, if we have offices in Vegas or Gran Canaria, yeah…(smile)…. yeah… I'd get the cynicism, but you know… Now I've bought it up a couple of times, I sent emails and I bring it up, keep bring it up delicately when I can. I got another catch up tomorrow and I'll bring it up again. But (…) I just think it's really important to go and sit with them even just twice a year, just go and sit with them, make sure they are alright.

> **Commented [Author33]:** Lack of travel policy for global virtual team managers

Interviewer: That's it? That's the purpose you want to go there? Go there, see them, sit with them and make sure they are alright?

Interviewee: Yeah! And that's enough! That's because, just like you know, as I talked to you before you trust them get on with it, but you want to make sure they feel they are part of the team and that you are there looking after them as well. Big part of it is sitting there next to them, sitting with them and working with them and if I see something happening and that shouldn't be happened, cos lots of time they might be too… Say, if somebody there is applying pressure to them who shouldn't be, and applying pressure to do the wrong role, to head down the path they shouldn't be. It can be difficult for them sometimes to stand up to that person, particularly if they are senior. And so, they need I to go out there to watch this happen so I can stop it happens and say "You know, this is not the support team remit. You need to go away and find a better team to do it" (laughs). Because you know, themselves might be too shy, or feel that it is not their position to say to a manager "I am not going to do that because it's not in the support team remit" and so they are having to take on all this extra work and I am not even aware of it.

<div style="float:right">Commented [Author34]: Build rapport with team members</div>

Interviewer: This is interesting. Have you ever in the same situation where you work in a global virtual global team and you have to deal with that kind of pressure, or any of your team members complain with you about the pressure at their local office?

Interviewee: Hmmm… we kind of had something similar. My office, we have many projects that are going on, and one of the things interesting is defining the role of the team internationally. So, I run a support team, but I found out quickly that support in London means something different to New York and Singapore. In New York, support tends to mean something very, very simple: switch it off and on again, or you know, like a helpline or I need to change my password, but in London, in the city support can get very, very technical, just kind of what I am looking for. And so, you get people out in New York passing stuffs to the support team that they should be doing themselves, particularly around pre-sales people so our support team is a post-sales function, but you get pre-sales people throwing work at the support team. They really shouldn't be doing. And so, I've managed to catch that a few times, but that's kind of the [senior] guys out there and [the virtual team members] are not getting that they can refuse this. I don't mean refuse it as in a brick wall, I just mean you know, offer them an alternative, just say "look, this isn't really… we are not responsible for this. You are, or this team is. You need to speak to them". But they might not feel that they can do that. And that's kind of where the pressure is. Not necessarily the work itself but more the kind of: I want to be able to say no, we're

<div style="float:right">Commented [Author35]: Provide training in local employment law and practices</div>

not going to do this, it's not for us. I don't have to say that without "will I get into trouble for saying that".

Interviewer: How do you protect your team from those kinds of thing?

Interviewee: Well, this is the thing, this is the tricky thing. I need to be out there. I need to see it. Because a lot of the time they won't mention it. Simply, maybe because something that only happens once a week, or once or twice a month, but it doesn't matter, it will still build up (smiled) or they forget about it when we have one-to-one, or they don't think it worth bringing it up or they think it's normal, that's what they should be doing. And so, you have to be there to catch things like that.

The thing is, when you meet someone one-to-one, you say "everything alright?", they'll never bring up the little things. They only try things that really big things that happened that they need to talk about, and that just… I don't know if it's a psychological thing… Just during… You got a half an hour update, you don't want to waste time, and also, they don't want to be seen to moan at their boss, "oh, this doesn't work. I have this guy kept asking me…" they don't want to see that, they don't want to be seen to be like that. And so, they only tend to bring up the really major stuffs, whereas it's actually usually the little stuff that worse because it's the little stuff that built up over time, and that's the stress more. If you have a big major incident, and generally everybody gets involved anyway, you know you are not alone because it's a major problem. But it's the little thing that build up, build up, build up and act as stress, that's worse.

Interviewer: You must be a very good manager to understand those kinds of thing.

Interviewee: Well, I think it just comes as experience. So, if you interviewed me in 2009, I would probably [not] have anything (laughs), anything like this, any of these insights as I haven't done it before.

Interviewer: As you have nearly 10 years of experience?

Interviewee: Yes, exactly. And so, you see it happens. And you just don't see it happens once, you see it happens twice, three times, four times, ah you think "ahhh ok, it's a pattern. This happens" (laughs) so that's when you realise… yeah.

Interviewer: So, you believe that if you can go to Singapore and New York and talk to your team, they can spill that out?

Interviewee: They will feel more comfortable if I am in front of them, yeah, definitely. Cos, it's just… if I am sitting next to them, it's just a case of them leaning over me and asking "what's this, I don't understand this, why do I have to do this", and it's private

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Commented [Author36]: Less oversight of team inference from other local managers

Commented [Author37]: Less oversight of team inference from local managers

Commented [Author38]: People do not share small problems in virtual meetings

Commented [Author39]: Experience in managing global virtual teams plays an important role

Commented [Author40]: Experience helps managers to recognise patterns and warning signs

between me and them and they also feel that… there is another good point… they might not feel they are in control of their message if it's done over Slack. They may be like "I complain about this to Chris, but what if Chris now just jumps up and runs straight to the senior managers or complaint about it, then it's a bit… We have Chinese whispers in the UK, which is a… probably racist now (laughs), to an Asian woman (both laughs – the interviewer is an Asian woman) but it's a game play where you think of a sentence, you whisper it, then the next person whispers it again. You know what I meant? And when it comes around the other side, it is usually something completely different. But that's what I think people are often scared of. They say something over Slack, it's well intentioned, but the person listen to it doesn't understand fully their intentions, goes straight off and try raise hell doing something about it, but actually you end up...

Interviewer: More dramatic?

Interviewee: Yes, more dramatic, exactly that (laughs), and you end up with embarrassing that person. But if they are next to you they can see what you are doing, they can see how annoyed you are, how angry are, and they say "calm down, it's not a big deal, it's alright (laughs) or no no you don't tell anybody about this, it's fine, we can handle it. Those kinds of things even on email, even conference calls are difficult.

> **Commented [Author41]:** Concerns of Chinese whispers

Interviewer: So, you want to go there to understand the situation, understand which pressure your team member might deal with?

Interviewee: Yes, the day to day ones.

Interviewer: And you tend to do that over observation or over discuss in person?

Interviewee: It would be both. The purpose of going out there was primarily observation, cos really discussion we can do over Slack and the thing is you can discuss a schedule let's go to a meeting room and sit down and talk things, but even then if you aren't front of them they might still not bring up the little issues, they might bring up the big ones cos it sounds this is weird. As I said, psychological things that if it's us two alone, 'he only wants to hear about the big thing', but I actually want me to hear about the little things because the big things I probably know about anyway, if they're that big. So, yeah, so I want to know about the little things and the only way to see that is to observe.

> **Commented [Author42]:** Benefits of physical visiting local offices

Interviewer: How do you observe them and what do you expect to see?

Interviewee: It's their interaction and how they – it's not even necessarily just them It's who's approaching them. If I see just one guy constantly approaching them – so there's quite a strict support model in that, if you want the support team to do something, you have

to raise tickets (we have a ticketing system). A product called Jira. If anyone wants support to do something they have to raise a ticket and that way I can keep track of what work we're doing, but you'll find that not everyone will do that and they'll just walk over , tap someone on the shoulder and say, 'Can you do this for me?', 'can you do that for me?' and the problem with that is it's a lot of hidden effort I don't see and so that's what kind of thing I'm looking out for more. There is also the element of watching the guys themselves. Are they getting stressed? And it's the body language thing I talked about earlier which is, you can tell if someone's getting stressed by looking at them but you can't, really, on an email. I mean they might say, 'I'm really stressed', but you don't know how stressed whereas if someone comes over and taps them on a shoulder (gestures) – 'Oh! What?!?!', you know. You can tell that there's a problem there and that they've got too much work on or they're being asked to do too much stuff that they shouldn't have to do, so.

Interviewer: But do you know that in psychology they say that, when someone is observed, they will tend to…You know…Overperform.

Interviewee: I know what you mean, but the point is I'm not going out there – I'm not saying to them, 'Hey guys I'm coming out to Singapore next week to come and watch you.' (laughs).

Interviewer: (laughs) So, what are you saying?

Interviewee: I'm saying, 'I'm going to come out next week to sit with you, to do some work with you and see what it's like. Maybe you're right – there might be an element of, 'the boss is here. Here's comes the boss, look busy!' but you're never going to get rid of that. But my point of going out there is to – to – you, know, I'll sit with them and just personally, you know, work with you and see what kind of things are going on. I won't say, 'I'm doing this *for* you. I'm doing this to watch you.

Interviewer: I don't know, how is it in Singapore and New York, but in Vietnam if we know that the big boss in London, for example, goes to Vietnam next week. Oh my God, we will clear out everything and make it perfect (laughs).

Interviewee: (Laughs) Well, I'm not that big of a boss.

Interviewer: But you know that if your boss is coming – if my boss is coming. Like when we're at school and , sometimes, we have the lesson with participation of the principle, or something like that, the teach will make it perfect and make sure which students will answer the question, you know, something like that so it can happen like that. So, it cannot be the reality.

Interviewee: You're probably right and I think – erm – I guess it's always a danger but, as you say, I mitigate that by not telling them that's what I'm out there for. It's also not the whole reason I'm out there. I'm out there to meet other people in the office who I deal with an have never met face to face. I might get feedback from them – 'how do you think the support team do in this office?' and they sort of tell me, 'oh they're great!' or, 'oh they're shit!' (laughs) and then I ask them what, you know, what they think needs to change and things like that.

Interviewer: So you really there to support your team, then?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, that's what I'm there for.

Interviewer: Hmm -You're a very good manager.

Interviewee: Well, I don't know.

Interviewer: (laughs) So, you say that it's hard – you struggle to fly there. To your team-

Interviewee: So, part of the problem is – my firm is a start-up, so the money my firm's got is investor's money so they're quite hot on costs and I think it's a cost issue. I don't really know how it works, I always thought expenses could be charged to tax (laughs) but maybe I'm completely wrong, but there are people like – there's a team called the DevRel (the developer relationship team) and their purpose is to travel so they go everywhere and they meet developers and try and get them interested in Corda and run training stuff and hold conferences and stuff, so part of it could be that they're worried that I want to move into that kind of thing and that I want to become (laughs) a traveller and go all over the world which is not true and, also, part of it, I guess, is that they think they might have to justify the cost. I don't think the cost is that much – erm – but, I don't know, it's something…I guess it's down to me to convince my bosses why I should go out there and I think I've got good reasons for it.

Interviewer: So, you explain to him that the reasons-

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: What did he say?

Interviewee: Yeah, I put it in an email. He agrees. I initially put once every quarter but he's kind of – well, 'maybe once every six months per office' which is fine. I figured I'd put – I thought once per quarter might be too much anyway, but I put that because it gave them room (laughs) –

Interviewer: (laughs) – To negotiate-

Interviewee: - Yeah, I thought if I put every 6 months they might have gone, 'once a year' and then what's the point of once a year and then if I'd have put once a year they'd say, 'what's the point?'. So I thought, if I push it to every quarter then I've got some wriggle room that we can negotiate around.

Interviewer: Cheeky! (laughs)

Interviewee: Well, yeah (laughs) – I guess so. But – erm- but, it's funny I'm meeting him tomorrow, and I'll bring it up again and hopefully he might just say, 'book it' because the last time I brought it up with my manager's manager, who used to be my old manager – erm – he didn't say no, he just sort of briefly mentioned it. But the way he said to me was, 'oh, yeah, so you want to travel don't you?' and I thought, 'I don't really-' (laughs) 'I don't really want to travel, I want to kind of sit with my team for a week, or two weeks, or whatever and say, so this is what you do? Oh, yeah, cool.'

Interviewer: So, how about – do you have any policy at your company like, who can travel? How often can you travel? Anything like that?

Interviewee: Erm – Not that I'm aware of, but like I say – with the DevRel team I mentioned earlier their purpose is to go and to travel, so I guess certain teams, the authorisation to travel is slightly looser than others, so you know, it's kind of – erm – for people – And people who are – like – the talent, so the head of talent guy. He travels a lot between offices because we're recruiting a lot at the moment so he has to be out there. So I guess it all depends on who you are and what – I think the first time getting out there will be the trickiest, but once I've done it and they've realised that I didn't need business class (laughs) and, you know, 5 nights at the Waldorf, or whatever, I'm find with standard stuff, then I think they'll be alright. There is travel policy, but that's more about booking travel, not about who can travel. So there are rules and guidelines and that for heading out there.

[Pause]

Interviewer: So, do you think that – erm – a company with local, virtual teams like that they should have a policy to let managers go to visit and –

Interviewee: I think so, yes. Absolutely, definitely it should be a part of – and not only that but they need to make – so, it should be policy, definitely but they also need to make sure they put it in the job description when they're advertising for the role.

Interviewer: Yes

Interviewee: …because it might not be convenient for some people and also they need to be clear on the frequency they're expecting it. So, I mean I'm talking maybe twice a year per office so four times a year, but – erm – some firms might want it more because they might have more teams all over the place. If someone's got a family, or something, they may not want to be travelling all over the place – erm – so, yeah, I do think it needs to be grounded in policy. Then it's clear on what the expectations are on the manager and, in turn, it's clear on what the expectations the firm has to meet the manager's goal to visiting the teams that they run. So, yeah. At the moment – it's a good point. A the moment, I think a lot of firms – it's a bit woolly on when people go out – when they should go out and I think it should be nailed down more, so when they join they – they're fully aware of what's expected and the firm know what's expected as well.

> **Commented [Author45]:** Job Description must be clear about any travel requirements

Interviewer: Hmm. That's a very good idea. And also, like, you don't have to deal with the embarrassing situation where the manager says to you, 'oh, you want to travel.' (laughs)

Interviewee: (laughs) Yeah, that's a very good point.

Interviewer: Because isn't that a bit embarrassing? (laughs)

Interviewee: (laughs) Yeah.

Interviewer: 'I've just come back from holiday! I don't need to travel!' (laughs)

Interviewee: Yeah, I don't really want to travel for 8 hours and then go into work! It's not my idea of – of – or even to Singapore for fourteen hours.

> **Commented [Author46]:** Long-haul flights, jetlag and busy schedule

Interviewer: Do you think your team members trust you?

Interviewee: I think so, at the moment. Erm – You know, it – you never know if it'll last. When I have one-to-ones with them it certainly comes across, but again, this is one of the things you can never really fully tell just from a video conference-

> **Commented [Author47]:** Difficulties in building trust

Interviewer: Oh, I have a question. You say that, since 2009 you already work at a Stock Exchange in a virtual team – something like that? So, they have a long history of using global virtual teams, do they already have a policy of – erm – travel for your team?

Interviewee: They didn't, no. So – in 2009 I was team lead of a team – it wasn't a global – my team wasn't a global virtual team, but my team had equivalent teams in Sri Lanka and Italy. I never travelled to Sri Lanka, but I used to go to Italy a fair amount – I guess because it's closer so there were – if there were things we had to do over weekends – tests and things and because Italy is only an hour and half away – in Milan – it was just easier to send me on Friday night because I could just come back Sunday. Erm – I never went to Sri

Lanka. But they didn't really have a policy. Again, it was pretty woolly. They only – I don't think anyone really ran a – other than the senior people like the COOs and CTOs I don't think anyone really ran a global team in the sense they had team members in different places – I'm just trying to think now – maybe – That whole thing came together because the Stock Exchange bought [Company Name], so it's not like they moved into Italy – they just bought a pre – you know – an Exchange 'off the shelf' (laughs) you know – it was all already there. And Sri Lanka was a software house, again, called Millennium. They bought it – it was already there so you didn't really have people in London that were managing teams in Italy because the managers were already there-

Interviewer: Oh, I see

Interviewee: Whereas I think the opposite would have happened if the Stock Exchange had opened another stock exchange branch in Italy in competition with [Company Name]. Then you would have found people in that Stock Exchange managing people in Italy. But other than the senior people you didn't really find – Sorry, so to answer your question, 'no there wasn't any' (laughs).

Interviewer: So, apart from the traditional practice where the manager goes to see their team and – erm – the team member come to see the manager, do you have any other idea or practice.

Interviewee: Yeah, so there was one at my last firm – em – but I never got to implement it before I left. And that was, when I first started they sent me to New York for two weeks just to sit with the equivalent team in New York – erm – and I – it was really beneficial because you could sit with them and you could see how they did things and you could – erm – put names to faces and it builds a better relationship because, previously, I'd just been dealing with them through Remedy tickets, or whatever – through email. To actually sit with them you recognise who they are and see their faces and learn their personalities and things. Erm – so, when I came back I said we should do this regularly throughout the year for all team members. So, they should – I – erm – wanted to set up – and I want to do it here, so I'll talk about the context of doing it at [Company Name] – so basically, we've got teams in Singapore, New York and London and I want to set-up a kind of exchange – erm – between all the team members, so got one guy who goes out from London to New York and they swap, so the New York guy comes to London. London guy's in New York for a week, two weeks? Haven't decided how long, yet. And, similarly, a guy from New York goes to Singapore, Singapore guy comes back to New York and then, again, Singapore guy goes to London and we do that throughout the year so that all the team members get to spend time in the other location just to see how they do things and if

there's anything they're doing that they think they could improve based on something they do in their own location – erm – and also so you can just get to know the team better and bond with the team-

Interviewer: Yeah –

Interviewee: …And put names to faces and meet other people in the office so the other people in the office – you know. A support team is quite central, so they need to meet other people and things like that. And also – and generally as well, we joked about my boss saying 'travel' earlier, but it is a perk for some people to get to go out to these locations and it would be nice to be able to send them to sit and work in a different location – you know – and I think that would boost their motivation. But, no, the primary reason would be cultural – to make sure they're sitting with their colleagues and makes sure – and to watch what they do and how do they take work on and are they using any tools that they could take back home or any ideas they could take back home with them. If they see someone struggling with an issue and they've dealt with that issue already back home a while ago but they didn't realise – they could just then say, 'oh this is how I fixed this.' And things like that. And just get to know the other people.

Interviewer: Hmmm. So, how's it going? Your idea.

Interviewee: Erm – it's got tacit approval. In fact, it's funny – it's one of these things where when you speak to people they're really enthusiastic about it and I've spoken about it to both people [both managers] and they've both been, 'That's a great idea and I'm more than happy to do that – I'll fully support that!' but I think the issue is when it comes down to money (laughs) so, they're going to have to fly people out there, they're going to have to put them up in hotels – I don't know. Now, one of the things that's been said to me was to plan it. So, we do our budgeting for next year in October, so this month. So, if I can get a plan together and send it to the COO and say, 'this is what I want to do and this is the estimated cost' then it's far more likely to be approved because they can control the cost then and they can – whereas is we don't plan it properly and – you know – just decide in January to book a flight out for one of my guys in February, well, a) it's going to cost more and it's going to be a surprise cost and it's more likely to get turned down, so…Yeah, I think it's more about value.

Interviewer: So, did your boss like your idea?

Interviewee: Well, yeah, at my last firm – erm – he stole it (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs)

Interviewee: …And appropriated it as his idea, and people were walking around saying, I really like this idea that so-and-so has come up with. But – And I'm kind of sitting there going, 'that was my idea!' Well, it happens sometimes. The thing that really annoyed me is that it never materialised (laughs) it didn't actually happen. So, he kind of appropriated it, so he was dealing with it, but then he never actually did anything about it...

Interviewer: But I think it's a good idea and, if I'm not wrong, I read somewhere like Microsoft, they actually did that for their teams.

Interviewee: Absolutely. I guess the problem is, though, that Microsoft is absolutely huge and has –

Interviewer: (Laughs) Yes, they have loads of money…

Interviewee: …It's chump change for them to send someone to New York for two weeks. They can probably afford to send them business class and put them up in the Hilton or the Waldorf, you know. But when your dealing – like my firm is technically still a start-up and using money from investors not their own money so they have to be very, very careful.

> **Commented [Author53]:** Cost of travel

Interviewer: Yeah, so it's also about money

Interviewee: Oh, cost, yeah. I definitely, definitely got the impression cost plays a big – which naively or not did surprise me – erm – because I've always thought in the grand scheme of things, flights and hotels and these places aren't terribly expensive compared to some of the other stuff we have to do. But – but costs in firms like this one, I've learnt, erm – you have this issue in firms – especially technology firms – where the support teams and the operational teams…they're not there to make money they're there to support. They're seen as just a big, black hole which people [pour] through money in. Erm – because they don't generate any revenue – now, this is slightly – one of the things we've changed at [Company Name] is that the support contract costs money, so if you want support for Corda, their software, you've got to pay more money. So, in a sense, this is the first support team I've ever been in that generates revenue but probably not that much. All the other support teams I've worked in have just been a cost centre and that's it, so people were reluctant to throw more money – because they don't see the value of it. If you look at a lot of FinTech companies or financial companies, they'll have fifty, sixty salespeople, maybe ten business analysts, but three support people in technology because they don't want to spend the money on something they don't see as revenue generating – er

Interviewer: [Garbled 06:45]

Interviewee: (laughs) Yeah, that's an interesting point. Cost where I am is definitely a consideration. I don't know if it would be as much of a consideration for, like, a salesperson because the way the firm would see it was, speculate to accumulate. If I need to send a salesperson out to Timbuctoo and they're after a big million-pound contract, well let's pay ten grand and send them out – you know – let's do that. Whereas for me, it's like I'm spending x amount of money to send [Name] to New York for two weeks, what do I get in return? Well, nothing monetary. I have to convince them that what they get in return is worth more that the money (laughs) and –

Interviewer: So, it all depends on two things – um – the position and the cost.

Interviewee: Yeah – the position and the cost, yeah.

Interviewer: I see

Interviewee: …And I think the position is fine at the moment, but the cost (laughs).

Interviewer: (laughs) Okay, thank you very much. There is so much more information that I even have thought of. Obviously, you're an expert – I got the right person to ask (laughs). So, lets move on and I will ask you more questions if you don't mind. So, to summarise, can I ask you – um – okay, for some more information about the types of virtual arrangements you have in place – like frequency, size of teams. So, how many members you have?

 Interviewee: Erm – at the moment, just six and we're looking for a seventh, including me. So, there's two in New York, two in London and two in Singapore. We're looking for another in London, so there would be six analysists plus me, the manager.

Interviewer: Okay, so how about the availability and use of technology to support virtual management-

Interviewee: Yeah, we – the firm's pretty generous with this stuff. Everything – there's no corporate network, so everything they use is in the cloud. As I said earlier, Slack – they use Slack – It's everywhere.

Interviewer: Yeah, what is Slack?

Interviewee: Slack is a – do you know internet chat?

Interviewer: Like WhatsApp?

 Interviewee: Oh, yeah! That's the one. Yeah, kind of like WhatsApp but over the internet (laughs). But you have lots of different channels that are for different subjects and you can have private channels and public channels, or you can have just firm channels – firm-wide channels. And the idea is that – erm – you're just chatting. You're right, it's just like

WhatsApp but everyone's on it – everyone has a login. And you can join as many channels as you want – erm – you…

Interviewer: Is it-Sorry -Is it like Facebook with different groups?

Interviewee: I suppose so, yeah.

Interviewer: But you don't put selfie on Slack (laughs)

Interviewee: You do, you put an avatar – you can post whatever you want, you can post pictures if you want, but generally in a corporate environment you wouldn't (laughs). You wouldn't post pictures of yourself on holiday in that (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: But you can, because people post diagrams and they upload files to it if they want. It's generally used for chat. I can show it to you later.

Interviewer: So Slack and then…

Interviewee: Obviously, email

Interviewer: Email…

Interviewee: And then…erm – there is the ticketing system we use for support called Jira.

Interviewer: What is it for?

Interviewee: That is a ticketing system. So, if you want to raise an issue with the support team you go onto a world wide web address and into that you type your username and password and then you are presented with a screen and you type in your problem, you know, here's my problem and here's what happens. You click save, you've got a ticket that goes to us immediately and we look at it.

Interviewer: So, that's it?

Interviewee: No, there's a thing called Confluence. And that's a document sharing application. It's like a Wiki? So, basically, I write a document and I put it onto Confluence, and anyone can change it.

Interviewer: Like google drive?

Interviewee: Yeah, but very public. Very much more public. Although, actually, like google drive but more like a website. So, not a list of documents you click to open, it's more like a website that's there but you can change it and edit it and it's unique to your firm.

Interviewer: Thank you. So that's it?

Interviewee: Yeah…Obviously, telephone (laughs)

Interviewer: (laughs)

Interviewee: A lot of phones, yeah.

Interviewer: Is there anything you wish you had but don't have?

Interviewee: Erm – (long pause) Not really, because I think that's the only things available in the tech-

Interviewer: Virtual reality? (laughs)

Interviewee: Well yeah, exactly (laughs) that's the only thing left. One thing I'll point out – Slack, I forgot to mention – also has video conferencing so you can use your webcam. You can actually chat – you can actually meet people so you can set-up meetings in Slack and then you can call them and meet face to face using a camera. And one thing I forgot, we use a thing called WebEx. And that is for – a meeting. So, if I want to arrange a meeting, I go onto my WebEx account and I set a time and a date – whatever – and I invite these people. Click 'go' and it sends out a link – an invite email to them – for a meeting at this time and the when the time arrive, my meeting room – it's a virtual room – opens and if they want they can see my screen or they can see my camera, or if I don't want them to see me they don't see anything. But that's the kind of thing we use for arranging meetings.

Interviewer: For me, I find it distracting if I had to manage all of these things – watch out for all of these things at the same time.

Interviewee: Oh, well. That's not quite right. So, the thing used most is Slack, then email. Now Jira is only used by my team and that's really because that's the way I manage work in the team. So, then Jira, then WebEx and Confluence, then telephone.

Interviewer: A, yeah, confluence is a tool to share document, not something to-

Interviewee: Yeah, you can get alerted on Confluence if you want. If you want to know if someone changes a particular document you can tell it to alert you, but these three are the live communication tools, really.

Interviewer: So Jira is to manage the work tasks. So, for communication you have mainly telephone, Slack, email WebEx.

Interviewee: Yeah, but even then WebEx is for meetings so it's not really to communication. Direct communication is these three, Slack, email and telephone.

Commented [Author58]: Technical enablers for global virtual teams

Commented [Author59]: Evaluate the effectiveness of Slack

Commented [Author60]: Evaluate the effectiveness of WebEx

Commented [Author61]: Evaluate the effectiveness of Slack

Commented [Author62]: Technical enablers for global virtual teams

Commented [Author63]: Evaluate the effectiveness of collaboration enablers

Commented [Author64]: Technical enablers for global virtual teams

Interviewer: I see, I got it. So, I want to ask a bit about the business drivers for virtual management from your point of view.

Interviewee: Erm – from my point of view. Erm – Well, I don't really have any (laughs) because my driver would be – erm – well no, okay – that's a complete lie, I've completely made a mistake – so, there's the business driver for the firm as a whole and then there's my drivers right?

Well one of them is I have to have virtual teams, so it's a kind of a roundabout way of approaching it, but we need to provide a twenty four hour response window if people raise support tickets and we can either do that by having shifts in London, so some people work in the morning, some in the afternoon, some in the evening, some at night which is very expensive – erm – Because you not only have to pay people to do the work, you have to pay them more because it's skilled work, so they're going to want more money, but not only that, they're going to want more money because you're asking them to work at weird unsociable times and not only that. I think, you'll often get things called shift allowances which are an extra – up to twenty percent on top of their salary – and I think that might be European law. I don't know, actually. So, it's very expensive. So, what we do instead is we have – this is the reason I manage a global team. Because we need some guys in London, some guys in New York and guys in Singapore. So, with a little manipulation of start times by an hour or so you get twenty-four hours cover during the week. It means there's always someone available to see new tickets come in. And so – my drivers for virtual management are, I have to have a virtual team. The drivers for the business as a whole are simply cost. They can pay me to run the whole team out of London or they can pay me to run the team only in London, someone else to run the team only in New York, someone else to run the team only in Singapore. Which is, again, very expensive.

> **Commented [Author65]:** Cost saving

Interviewer: Hmm. When your company recruit people in New York and in Singapore – erm – apart from the cost and twenty four hours is there any particular reason why they chose Singapore and New York and like, why not Vietnam? Why not France?

Interviewee: Simply because that's where their offices are. That's literally it. They need to put them somewhere. When you employ someone – I know nowadays you can work from home a lot, but when you employ someone you need to give them an office to sit in. At the moment we have offices in London, New York and Singapore. If they opened an office in Vietnam, then they would employ people in Vietnam. So – erm – its – there is some issues at the moment around language which is a good point...

> **Commented [Author66]:** Selection of physical locations to recruit virtual team members

[Pause]

Interviewee: So, anyway, language. So, even in Singapore – you know – the language of business is English, and Singapore is a big business place so they all speak English over there, same in New York and, obviously, London. We have had points – so, for instance, we run a global market and there's been a lot of interest from Asian banks, especially Japan? And the thing with Japan is they don't do a lot of business in English. They don't really need to, they're quite an isolated country. Erm – so we are going to have to find a way of being able to support and serve those customers in Japanese. It would probably cost too much to teach the support team Japanese (laughs) and would require and amount of dedication from them that we might not (laughs) be able to guarantee. Erm – so, yeah, we need to look at that. And there's also Russia. Russia is a huge, huge country with a big market who don't do a lot of business internally in English because they don't need to. So, yeah, we need to find.

Interviewer: So that's why you chose Singapore?

Interviewee: Yeah, Singapore they all speak English over there. We could have done Hong Kong but we didn't have an office in Hong Kong. I think we would have had offices in either Hong Kong or Singapore and it was Singapore, so we went with that.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. So, we make a joke about virtual reality earlier, but do you think – is there any chance it could come true one day?

Interviewee: I think next step is not necessarily virtual reality in business, but augmented reality in business.

Interviewer: What is it?

Interviewee: It is – erm – it's actually used in some games at the moment. But it's when you are presented with a real view of a room but you're wearing glasses, or something, and instead of the room – in virtual reality the whole room would be replaced with someone digital, but in augmented reality the room's still there but something else – the digital things are put in on top of the room so it looks as if there is something in the room with you. So, look, there's a chair opposite me that's empty but if I'm in a conference call with someone in New York what I could do is put some glasses on and see the person sitting there digitally and it would feel more like I'm talking to them. And maybe the technology would be such that it could pick up the movements of their face so you could see their expression, you know, then I could get body language from them – the movement of their arms and things like that, so I really would be able to tell if they're lying or annoyed (laughs) or whatever. Even though, to be fair, you can kind of do that on video conferencing. But that might be what's next as opposed to pure virtual reality. But they

could present something or draw something, and it would come out of thin air instead, you know, that kind of thing. But that's what's next, I think.

Interviewer: But is it – Is that technology already.?

Interviewee: Yeah, you'll see it in games. That Nintendo thing – what was it called? (laughs) Not the DS – was it the DS? It was a handheld thing Nintendo produced – erm – and they had a game on it. Oh, no, maybe it was just for mobiles because they had a game on it called Pokemon Go, do you remember that? Have a look at Pokemon Go and you'll see what I mean. What happened was, it took real world data and maps and it made out these little hotspots on the map and the idea was you had to catch these little monsters – these pokemon – that they built into the software at certain points on the planet where you could catch specific types of these monsters. In fact, when I was in New York with the previous job, I was walking down fifth avenue and past this – I can't remember what it was called – it might have been near Central Park or on the way to Central Park. Anyway, there were hundreds of people around this one place staring at their phone –

Interviewer: Pokemon?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was Pokemon. And, at first, I didn't know what it was and I just casually mentioned it when I was back in the office – It was funny because when I saw all these people staring at their phones I just thought they were being unsociable (laughs) erm – but one of the guys said, 'oh yeah it's a pokemon gym', and apparently that's where you took your little monsters you caught. But you had to physically go there. And if you held up your screen – it used your phone camera – you could see your screen but your little Pokemon would show up because it would digitally put it onto the screen. So that's augmented reality. Virtual reality is like a completely new environment whereas augmented is dropping bits of digital things into—

Interviewer: So, you think it can be the future of virtual teams?

Interviewee: At the moment I think it's more likely than pure virtual reality because we've already got the technology for it, so it's going to be cheaper. Also, virtual reality might be a bit too much for – erm – unless maybe you're working on a specific problem, I don't know.

> **Commented [Author69]:** Some thoughts about future technical enablers for global virtual team

Interviewer: I got it. Thank you. So, over the past – lets say ten years because you've been in that position – would you say virtual management across organisations has increased, decreased, remained the same or not moved at all.

Interviewee: Er – increased. Definitely.

Interviewer: How do you describe?

Interviewee: Increased? Do you mean, what type of tools do they use, or whatever?

Interviewer: Increased slowly, or significantly?

Interviewee: I think it started slowly, but then more recently very significantly. Yeah, people are taking advantage of the fact that you can get cheaper labour – rightly or wrongly – in other parts of the world. And it all started around 2000 in Bangalore when people started off-shoring a lot of development work – expensive development work to India because it was so cheap in Bangalore. To an extent that still happens, but now there's other places. Malaga was one, as well. They would offshore a lot of stuff to Malaga because it was cheaper in Spain to do it. And to be able to do that you need to be able to manage these teams of developers you've got out there – these teams of IT people. And so, yeah, that – And it's a strange thing, I suppose, really that the result of saving a lot of money meant they had to invest a bit more in managing, but I guess it was still worth it – I don't know.

> **Commented [Author70]:** Further discussion about cost-saving as a business driver for global virtual teams

Interviewer: I see. So, talking about global virtual management issues and challenges – erm – what do you think?

Interviewee: Erm – I think it's more – it's the personal aspect that's the challenge. The social aspect – being with a person, being able to talk to them in front of them – you know. That's a big challenge. And I think, not necessarily manging them, but keeping track of the work they're doing.

> **Commented [Author71]:** Key issues and challenges

Interviewer: What about their performance?

Interviewee: Er – Performance you would hope you would see by the results of their work. I suppose you're right – definitely their performance, yeah, but there's enough tools to gauge – the thing with performance is it takes so much energy and so much time. To a manager, it's a pain in the – (laughs) to manage people's performance and so what they've already done, really, is there's a lot of tools out there already that help people manage people's performance simply because since time began managing an employee's performance has just taken so much time and so much cost that people have already been working on easier ways to do it. But for me – and somebody may not necessarily agree or they may not care, but to me – yeah – I want to be able to make sure that the work they're doing is on track with the firm's strategy and team's strategy and I want to be able to make sure that the team is gelling – they're working together. Not necessarily becoming best buddies but they know each other, they're happy working with each other, they feel

> **Commented [Author72]:** Outcome-based performance system

comfortable talking to each other and exchanging ideas and things like that and that's the social aspect of it.

Interviewer: So, for you it's more about the social aspects like, engagement and rather than – but for the tools to manage performance you're satisfied with what you have at the moment.

Interviewee: Yeah. I've – you know, I don't – As I say people may disagree with me and have different viewpoints but-

Interviewer: Everybody has different viewpoints, yeah. But – erm – okay. Now we move to global virtual managers businesses. I think that you know loads. So, what do you think generally managers need to be effective in these areas? Like knowledge, attitude and things?

Interviewee: Definitely in the technologies used. I think gone are the days when managers could get away with claiming, 'Oh, I don't know anything about this' or 'Technology? Paw' they need to be able to use these – erm – these tools to connect.

Interviewer: So they need to be –

Interviewee: Yeah, technology competent and not be afraid of it (laughs) but there are still managers out there that are very – erm – manual and don't like technology.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: And they still manage a global team?

Interviewee: Yeah, largely through experience or through politics or just the firm is huge – or they have P.A.s that do everything for them, so-

Interviewer: Technology competent, and what else? Attitude?

Interviewee: Yeah, so there's this whole – you know – to be understanding of other people's cultures and to be worldly, if that's the right word or doesn't sound too pretentious. It's no good if you're like a little Englander. A little Englander is a thing we use for somebody who's not interested in the outside world beyond their little – you know – their little town or whatever. So, they're a bit clumsy or ignorant when it comes to understanding cultures or the way people talk. You might inadvertently offend somebody by saying something that's perfectly fine to say in the UK, but wouldn't be acceptable in Asia or India, you know. So, you've got to be aware of that and you've got to be

comfortable with that and not be someone that says, 'I don't care they can just like it.' Culturally sensitive – you've got to be culturally sensitive. You've got to appreciate that, although they will speak English, they won't necessarily speak English as well as you, so you need to avoid things like slang and make sure you speak properly and clearly and be patient.

Interviewer: What have you experienced when working with people who have different native languages but all speaking English?

Interviewee: It's more about accents. If someone's got a thick accent, you have to be patient and – you know – try and say, 'I'm really sorry can you repeat that?' you know, and sometimes they have to repeat things more than once. Sometimes, it's not just accent, it can be the volume. So, without attacking anyone, for instance, Americans tend to be quite loud, but clear. Our New York guys speak loud and clear when I speak to them, but there's a couple of guys in Singapore in Asia who are very quiet when they talk. They're almost whispering. And so that's different as well. You just kind of need to cope for that. I can't think of any specific misunderstandings but there could be thing- Well, so when we used to work with Italians, the interesting thing about the way Italians talk to each other is that they talk over each other a lot. So, they'll have a conversation but they'll both be talking at the same time. And that's really strange to watch when you're from England and that's considered very rude in England – to talk over someone when having a discussion. But the thing is, if you're talking to someone in Italy, like when I was out there, they will suddenly start talking over you and, at first, it's very disconcerting and very – you think they're ignoring you or interrupting you because they don't agree with you or they think you're wrong and they just want to shut you down but that's actually not the case (laughs). And when I first went to Italy and I saw it happening in the restaurants and bars and stuff and they're talking over each other you realise that this is just the way they communicate. It's a cultural thing. So – I mean, again, that's another good reason for going out to the place because up until I'd seen lots of them doing it, I just thought the people I spoke to in Italy are just being rude (laughs) but when you actually go out there and talk to them, they say, 'no this is normal.'

Interviewer: That's a good point. Another reason to travel.

Interviewee: Yeah, understanding cultural differences are better when you're there.

Interviewer: So, what are the top three communications problems you have experienced working in a virtual team?

Interviewee: Erm – so, number one would probably – I'm just trying to think how to put it…. It's am I communicating enough? So, you get a lot of information throughout the day about the firm or about your team and a lot of it will be in passing. So, someone might just make a comment in passing as they're walking past you. It could be you're on the way down to lunch or something and someone just starts talking to you - erm – but there are guys in New York and Singapore who won't hear that but to me it's quite important, but I don't realise how it's important at the time or I'm just not thinking globally or about the team at the time because I'm distracted or I'm eating my lunch (laughs) so I don't immediately think, 'oh, I need to communicate that to the team because that sounds quite important and we need to do something about it.' I'll kind of take it under advisement but then, potentially, sit on it. So it's being able to decide what needs to be communicated to the team and how urgent that is and to make sure you do it. Because it's also easy to forget, right? You can be bombarded with lots of information so making a note of things – Am I telling them enough about what's happening? Have I missed anything out?

…What else?

What if the technology breaks? (laughs) What if the office network goes down or the WiFi goes down? I can't speak to them! Even our phones are IP so I'd have to use my mobile but, yeah, if the technology goes down, I can't talk to them, so…

Interviewer: Or you don't have internet?

Interviewee: Yeah. One really important thing I forgot – It's just made me think about it. But from their point of view. So, say it's New York time – no, say it's Singapore time eight thirty in the morning and that's about midnight or whatever over here, so I'm probably asleep and everyone in London is probably asleep. But if they get in at eighty thirty in the morning and, all of a sudden, something happens they need to talk to someone about it. So, their communication issue is that they have to wake me up if it's urgent, or they have to wake somebody up. So -erm – from their point of view that's a really tricky thing to do when you know you're disturbing somebody, or you've got to wake your boss up. Rightly, or wrongly (laughs) it's scary. What if it's nothing? What if you wake your boss up and he's like, 'for God's sake why have you called me about this? Pull yourself together, I'm going to speak to you in the morning about this!' (laughs). That will scare them and they'll never call you again even though the next time it happens it might be a really serious issue – erm – so, you know, that's one issue where – how do they communicate when they know they're going to disturb someone? How do they communicate? We put a – erm – on-call process in place for them to do that, but it doesn't take away completely – I mean, they know there's people designated on-call and there's

people are paid a stipend for being on call so they know there's people they can phone, but at the same time there's still that hesitation. Is it okay to calls them about this?

Commented [Author83]: Time differences cause challenging issues for both virtual managers and team members

Interviewer: So, do you have any solutions to fix this or -?

Interviewee: No. Just don't get angry. If they call you by mistake don't get angry with them. If it keeps happening. If it happens again and again and again then you need to be quite firm but not at the time they call you. You do it the next day when everyone's sort of – even with the time difference in Singapore I get in at nine or ten o'clock I can still talk to them and say you need to do something about this. How can we help you become more confident at this time because you don't need to call these issues out.

Commented [Author84]: Manage personal emotion

Interviewer: I see. I got it.

 [Pause]

Interviewee: So what I was going to say was, if you're managing a virtual team you need to make sure that your team members have a certain amount of maturity and experience because, for instance, if you take someone who's straight out of university or straight out of school – erm – they may not have the maturity to deal with being on their own in a location thousands of miles away from their manager or even fifty miles away from their manager. So, you need to be able to – So, I guess this falls into the trust as well. You need A lot of the trust comes from their background, their experience, their maturity and you know, if they're a kid straight out of school can you really trust them to get on diligently with their work or are they going to, you know – And making sure they're interested in the work you're making them do because otherwise they're just going to wander off and do something else and not get their work done.

Commented [Author85]: Make sure that the candidates have a certain amount of maturity and experience

Commented [Author86]: Make sure that the candidates are interested in the work they are going to do

Interviewer: So, quick question is that what maturity is good enough for you and how do you judge that they are really interested in what they are doing?

Interviewee: Erm – well, I can't really say how old are they because that's illegal! But what you look for is a good level of experience working independently and you look at that on their CV and you interview them and…. the second question? What was that again?

Commented [Author87]: Make sure that the candidates have a certain amount of maturity and experience

Interviewer: How do you know that they are really interested in the work you're providing?

Interviewee: Oh, sorry. Yes, that's interview again. You just have to interview them and ask a lot of questions about it. What do they want to be and what do they want to do? That kind of thing. If it sounds like they're only applying for this job because they want another

one at the firm then no, if they're only apply for this job as something to keep them off the street (laughs) then no, you know. You can work it out by speaking to them.

Interviewer: Okay. So, the youngest. The youngest member of the team, how old are they?

Interviewee: He's twenty something and he's straight out of university (both laugh). But he's in Singapore and he's a guy from China and there's a level of maturity he has that suits the role but also we kind of took a risk on that, but we know it's a risk. We didn't have a lot of choice because we had trouble with recruitment in Singapore. Mainly around technical ability. He passed the technical code tests. There were discussions around, can we offer this guy a position knowing his manager is the other side of the world? There was a lot of talk about that. But we decided to take a risk on him because if it went wrong he wouldn't be an enormous investment because he has less experience so he's not as expensive – erm – and we needed someone in quick.

Interviewer: How is it going so far?

Interviewee: Fine. He's actually really good! (both laugh)

Interviewer: So, will you withdraw your statement earlier about maturity?

Interviewee: No, because that almost proves the rule. The fact that we had lots of extra discussions around it. And it's never perfect. You never get everyone who's absolutely perfect – I'm sure if we hadn't have made him an offer, we'd still be looking now and that would be way to late. It was already too late when we employed him.

And you reminded me about something else: how do we interview overseas? We have to do it over Slack and stuff which makes it more difficult. That means the interviews aren't as personal.

Interviewer: But that would reflect the kind of working environment he'd be in anyway.

Interviewee: Yes, that's true.

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Answers to follow-up questions

Question: It is argued that different ways of interpreting of perceptions and expectation may lead to confusion, frustration and disincentive, can therefore affect individual performance as well as overall team performance, and as a result, linked to

trust issues. What cultural adaption activities or policy managers can do (or offer) to improve trust?

Answer: Training on different cultures is a good start. that, although the team is virtual, they get to meet. At my firm, at least once a year, teams are flown to London for a group get together over a couple of days with brainstorming sessions, training and socialising. Meeting people informally is the fastest way to understand their culture and the way they behave.

Enforce cameras on all virtual conference calls. It's important that each person can be seen so that facial expressions and gesticulations are visible.

> **Commented [Author90]:** Provide cross-cultural traning

> **Commented [Author91]:** Team members should be encouraged to travel and meet their remote colleagues

> **Commented [Author92]:** Turn video on during conference calls

Question: Global virtual teams often comprise of people from various geographies and cultures, as such assumptions, beliefs, values and orientations may radically differ among members. How might this affect individual performance and team performance?

Answer: I don't think it necessarily affects individual performance. If you have a good team member that produces good work then I don't think it's necessarily down to their culture. What you may find is that different cultures have different attitudes to work. In the US, for instance, work is a fixed part of life and workers are expected to be called at home any time regardless of where they are or what they're doing. In Europe, this is not acceptable. So, you could argue you would get more performance out of a team member in the US, but I would disagree. The worker in Europe may be happier because they can spend time away from work and this makes them work harder.

> **Commented [Author93]:** Difference in working hour and work-life balance

Question: Studies shows that it is quite common that during virtual meetings people mute their phone when not speaking and carry on side conversations, read and respond to e-mails. What is the positive or negative effect of this? Is there anything you or your colleagues did that help to make things better?

Answer: I think the only positive effect is that a person is more likely to turn up to a meeting if they know they can multi-task all the way through it, but generally it's a bad thing. People will not fully understand what is being said or what is being asked of them.

The best way around it is to force everyone to use video conferencing so they can all be seen and to make the meeting as interactive as possible so people have to pay attention. Ask questions, ask for suggestions, ask other people to talk for a few minutes.

> **Commented [TH94]:** Communication overload: participants disfavour multi-tasking

Question: Is it possible to estimate how much does your company save up by running virtual teams compared to hiring 100% local people? (If not, please explain why.)

Answer: Actually, my company doesn't save money - our offices are in three of the most expensive locations in the world - I have staff in NYC whose salaries are almost as much as mine. We run virtual teams world-wide because we need a 24/7 response to customers due to the type of work we are doing.

Commented [Author95]: Cost saving

Question: Would you consider yourself as a transactional leader or transformational leader? Please explain.

Answer: Transformational. It's important for me that I work with the team as this sets examples and sets the vision more clearly. It eventually enables them to work independently. They can choose their path to the results and I am only required to check the results are correct (or, at least as close to correct as possible) and then offer feedback or encouragement. Dealing in transactions with the team means constantly micromanaging each team member which is stressful for both sides and very difficult if the team is on the other side of the world in a different time zone. It also implies a lack of trust (I don't trust them to work unless I specifically reward them) which you can't have in a virtual team.

Commented [Author96]: Transformational leadership

Commented [Author97]: Transactional leadership

Question: From your point of views, transformational or transactional leadership is more effective in virtual teams? Please explain why and how, if possible.

Answer: As I said above, it's important that a team can work independently, and this is even more relevant when the team is in a different time zone on the other side of the world. I can't be awake at 02:00 everyday to ensure the Singapore team are ploughing through their tasks or that everyone's at their desk. Setting examples the team can follow independently without having to revert back to me is important.

Commented [Author98]: Establish processes and tools for self-managing virtual teams

Question: With the Covid-19, many global virtual team members are currently working from home instead from their offices as before. Do you think home-based global virtual teams will be common in the long run, post Covid-19?

Answer: I think the tide has turned for permanent on-site employees, at least for white-collar roles. For a lot of firms, it has been proved that productivity is maintained during work from home plus quality of life is better for people. Yes, I think there will be a lot of

more virtual teams in the long run plus, they will become more global as people realise you do not need someone who can make it to an office every day. You can truly choose from a global talent pool.

Question: From your point of view, what are the support policies and management practices companies need to provide global virtual team members who work from home to enhance their performance? (i.e. creating home office, work-related tools, gym workout, health and safety, flexibility, childcare, team-building activities, etc…)

Answer: Health and Safety is important. Do people work from home in a suitable environment? Companies still have a duty of care to their employees and need to make sure they are provided with suitable equipment to carry out their roles. I think one thing companies need to watch out for is liability. If a worker is injured due to bad health and safety practice, is the company liable? If the worker is watching children while working and something happens during a conference call, is the company liable? I think care has to be taken to ensure that responsibilities are very, very clear in law. One company I worked for actually stipulated in their work from home policy that you were not permitted to work from home if the reason was to look after children.

I also think providing an office somewhere is important, but it doesn't have to be a huge one. It can be a meeting hub or a base for workers to visit when they need to.

Companies also need to improve their security. If people are at home, they will either need to be logged onto a closed network via VPN or their equipment needs to be locked down sufficiently that it cannot be used in ways it wasn't intended for. There was a scandal a few years ago when a man from the US worked exclusively from home but, unbeknownst to his employer, had outsourced his job to a man in China who would use software to remote onto the employee's PC and do the work. He was only caught because a network operator for the company happened to notice a lot of connections coming from a location in China where he knew they didn't have offices. They actually thought they were being hacked by Chinese competitors at first!

https://www.latimes.com/business/la-xpm-2013-jan-17-la-fi-mo-man-outsourced-job-to-china-20130117-story.html

> **Commented [Author99]:** Work from home

Question: Could you please name some tools FinTech firms use for performance management?

Answer: There are two common tools used for online performance management. Namely is an HR software that can be used to set performance goals and enter performance reviews as well as other HR based function. Workday is a bit bigger. It is similar to Namely but also includes expenses management and budget management. It is more expansive than Namely.

Interview number 2

Type of interview: Face-to-face interview

Date: 20 November 2019

Location: London

Duration: 00:45:87

Job title of the interviewee: Head of Technical Operations

Gender: Male

Age range: 40-50

Team size: 15 people (based in London, Singapore and New York)

Size of company: 400 people

Type of business: Enterprise Software Development

Global virtual management experience: 15 years

Interviewer: There's this term 'global virtual team' which is what all the academic literature calls it at the moment, but what do you think that means?

Interviewee: So, I mean. So yeah, so I think there's two things, right? If you're leading a global team you've got direct reports in different parts of the world, and the virtual team thing is where we had … so I had like in the past where you've had like people like WiPro, TCS, Satia and all those guys right? They've got teams for you but they're offshore ones basically? So the way I look at it I think global virtual team for me means a bunch of guys or girls or teams in an offshore type of – where you don't necessarily have line management of – for me it's like if it's a global team then you have either a line manager there in the country or your managing it from here wherever it is right – That's where I sit.

Commented [Author101]: Managing geographically dispersed team members through various collaborative communication technologies

Interviewer: And so, by the team virtual management, what do you understand by that?

Interviewee: See, Virtual Management, I think, for me it sounds – virtual management for me sounds like you are – you're giving them tasks, you're line-managing them. Now I know in the context of what we're doing we say it's actual line management, right? But I think virtual management for me is you are giving them tasks and they are being line-managed locally. That's the way – that's the way –

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So – I see – I know what you mean. So, they do have a line manager out there, but you're-

Interviewee: Yeah, so basically with WiPro and TCS you would get a line-manager who would be interfacing to you for requirements and then they'd go back into their virtual - the team that they had and they would get the work done for you and, sometimes, that was bits of work - like - scope out bits of work so – 'do you know what, for *Remedy* I need an update done one this page that includes this filter or this blah?' – they just say, 'Yeah we'll do that for it – it'll cost you –' - you know whatever it is – you wouldn't know who it went to?

Interviewer: - Oh, I see…

Interviewee: It would be a task that you give them and kind off get it done and come back?

Interviewer: Oh, I see, so they kind of – oh, yeah. So, they kind of work with you – you don't' really see the end user-

Interviewee: It's like work package stuff. You send them something to do and off they go – they come back and give it to you. [It's] still your team – there's still someone there, right? But you don't know who it's gone too.

Interviewer: - You don't know physically who's done it.

Interviewee: -You don't know if it's gone to 'xy' or 'z' - it's just been done

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: I mean, so that's the way I see it, but I don't mind what we talk about, here-

Interviewer: No – that's exactly the kind of thing. Because I've never thought if it like that as well. You're managing somebody out there and you never really know who it is – you've just got a contact that you've delivered a request to.

Interviewee: Yeah – you've got a guy out there whoever it is in Bangalore or god knows where, you know, or wherever it is. You send them something they go and do it and they get back to you. You don't know who in the team has done it.

Interviewer: Yeah. Yea that makes a lot of sense. Yeah, that's fair enough. And then, so – What do – So, the business drivers for virtual management in the London fintech industry.

Interviewee: So, let's just say – let's assume, basically, that our virtual management – what we're talking about here is the difficulties management teams where they're a part of your company. They're interfacing with you directly, right? You're their line manager around or something like that. Let's just say that for the virtue of what we're doing here which is what I guess you want to get into right?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So, let's do that. Ermm… What are the business drivers of virtual – so for us, is all about having presence in different time zones right? So same as you – I mean the operations team – the reasons why we've got guys in Asia is because we need to have APAC customers EMEA customers, US customers and it gives us that 24/7 or 24/5 coverage

Interviewer: it's coverage for us –

Interviewee: It's coverage for us, right? It's all about the coverage. So that's the reason why we're doing it. Erm.. yeah

Interviewer: I guess potentially other drivers, but not necessarily for our teams, would be the markets but then we wouldn't – we're not really – we don't care who buys is and who sells it.

Interviewee: Well, I mean it does help doesn't it? Having [Name] and [Name] work directly with [Name] – I think it helps

Interviewer: Well….. [Laughs]

Interviewee: Exactly – you understated right? Exactly but yeah, I mean having [Name] and [Name] work directly with them as well - it does help because it – you know, it makes the offering for that part of the region a stronger offering. In the past where we've had no support – for example, we used to have – in Japan I used to have one engineer in Japan and he was based - and shared between me, so I used to run professional services , operations, support and everything else. It was one engineer there, right?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: And he used to be the interface into all our customers, right? And, basically it got to the point where it's like, you know, some customers are turning around to us and asking why you haven't got anyone here? Why - why - why me, as a Japanese customer am I going to give you work if all you're doing is sending it somewhere else right? It made no sense for us, whatsoever?

Interviewer: Ah, I see – so you were sharing a resource

Interviewee: We shared resources between us

Interviewer: So actually, some other team could come in and, because he's far away, you can't see them talking to him. It's could go around through the technology/email, right? 'You're with me for the next two days'

Interviewee: Never knew, mate, never knew – so I'd have to go and say, 'Hey mate something's going on blah blah blah' and he would go, 'Y-yeah I've just go to finish off blah blah', right? And it's things like that – you never knew. You'd share resources between departments, but it's mental because high-cost countries like - really high cost countries like Japan right? Getting someone in Tokyo is stupidly expensive right? So we couldn't' afford to scale the team, right? If you need a presence there – support presence or operations presents or professional services presence, right? You'd effectively – to a certain extent – as much as they were in our team they were actually Sales Engineers sweeping along the three lines but we were paying for them – they were effectively the Sales Team, right?

[Pause]

It was hard, man. It was really hard work. It caused some many fucking – right – so much grief. I used to get hauled out to Japan at east every six months to get my arse handed to me and chewed off. It wasn't – half the time it wasn't – I'd be like..[laughs] …Why me?

Interviewer: This isn't part of the question but one of the things that's interested me is why – They'd always pick you because you were Head of the team or was it that you had personal circumstances at the time? Because I often wonder if somebody knows that a) you're married you've got a kid over here, but this guy over here - I know he's single, he's in the pub every night so we could just send him or is it purely –

Interviewee: Bit of both. Bit of both, man. Definitely bit of both. I could move quickly. I'm married, right? I haven't got any kids and at the time when I was looking after that the global team – I've forgotten what they called it…erm…yeah…everyone else was um …'Weekends, I want to be at home,' right? But if you're going to Japan, right? You're leaving on a Saturday – the flight left at 14:00 on a Saturday you'd get into Japan at 16:00 on a Sunday, right? So you've lost twelve hours. You get there and you're awake right? You try and sleep – the next morning – Monday morning you've got to go down to [Name] or wherever - God knows where you've been sent - right? Monday morning you're in there with the head of APAC right? Monday, Tuesday Wednesday you're getting absolutely shouted at. Thursday you're in the office trying to tidy up what's going on, Friday you're on your way home. You leave on Friday night at 17 o clock, or whatever it is, you get back home on Saturday morning whatever it is – you're back home Saturday at, what 5 or 6 am? Right? You get home you take the couple of hours to get home or whatever it was. You get home by twelve or whatever it was. Who's? going to do that? Who's going to go home, feel like crap for the whole weekend and then go back into the office on Monday?

Commented [Author106]: Family ties

Commented [Author107]: Long-haul flights, jetlag and busy schedule

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah. I suppose its seniority as well. Because, you're - if you're pretty junior you don't get much say. If you're senior you can say I'm not doing that-

Interviewee: Yeah, well I used to repot into the Head of Global-

Interviewer: Oh, so this was senior? [laughs}

Interviewee: Yeah, I used to report into the head of global services, right? You have head of global series then me, and then a team of 120 or whatever it was, right? And I had line managers in place but erm – but some guys reported directly into me so these individuals that we have – some of them reported in [Name] some of them reported into – I've forgotten who it was – [Name] -- Or unfortunately, sorry I' rambling –

Interviewer: No, it's cool.

Interviewee: It's just tough, man. It's just tough.

[Pause]

Interviewer: No, no, it cool. I am just checking on my mic.

Interviewee: Generally, it's just because one, they knew that I'd go on short notice. And two, I think some of those relationships and three it was just you know when a complaint is much more than mine.

Interviewer: Well I guess so yeah I don't know but look back and think oh, you should have done that.

Interviewee: I should have made a lot more right? I definitely should have made a lot more right.

Interviewer: Um yeah so the next one is oh can you provide some specific, I mean it say specific but you know about the virtual management relationship you've got at the moment.

Interviewee: So, we've got what? We've got two in New York, two in Singapore, three in London at the moment. Uh we're growing, so if you'd ask me we'll have some more people in New York, London, Singapore uh frequency of meetings, so every morning I have stand-ups with them. So, every morning I've stand up with Singapore and London. Every evening I have stand-ups with London and New York. Uh, every two weeks we are sprint planning. Every two weeks, so every other. So, for example we do it week one, week three, we're sprint planning. Week two, week four we're backlog grooming and that's with both teams. Uhm communication generally is on Slack and email and WebEx. Um I go to see them, I've only seen the New York team once. The Singapore team, I rarely see. Although, I actually haven't met face to face [Name] who's been in our team for the last six months. I've met him yet

face to face, we hired him when he started um. Yeah, he's all right, um he's coming out yeah, they're all coming out next year for one visit, um that's it.

Interviewer: Um, you have a stand-up in the morning with London and Singapore. Then stand-up in the evening with London and New York. So, London gets two stand-ups in a day.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think that's more like London has an advantage there?

Interviewee: No, it's a disadvantage. I think London-- and London is at a complete disadvantage, so the thing is like you speak the Singapore team and they're like oh blah blah blah, you know you guys you know and you know New York team still hasn't at the moment, they still haven't become as vocal as maybe the Singapore team has or the London team. Yeah, this is a little bit they're trying to figure out you know.

Interviewer: I was going to say one in my team seems to disappear completely, do any of yours as well?

Interviewee: So, no they're around mate and there's no problem at all. But the um they're not as vocal as - like this they've still got the culturally, they've still got the hierarchy thing right so yeah whilst here there's no sense of the hierarchy here. There's no sense of hierarchy in Singapore right, there's still like a little bit more.

Interviewer: Yeah, and that's true. That's true, yeah you're right.

Interviewee: There is a lot more respect for the line management respect, respect in a way which is you know they call you, you don't call them whilst everyone else has got a tendency to pick up the phone and go hey [Name] here's what we've been complaining about today. Thank you, thank you very much.

Interviewer: So, it's also worth mentioning. I don't think I mentioned this last time. In our meeting rooms because we're in one now, we have virtual conferencing technology like big Tvs and cameras that zoom into the people that are talking and things like that um which are pretty useful when they work, when they work it's cool.

Interviewee: I think our facilities are seriously my best facilities I've ever had.

Interviewer: Agreed. We are both worked in support and operations in big institutions, and they put you in utter shit holes. I mean just around the back of the railway station.

Interviewee: Yeah, exactly.

Interviewer: Yeah, awful. What are the key challenges or issues you face when you manage a global virtual team? You've probably already touched on some of those stuff.

Interviewee: You've got like the communication, but you'll see, you'll see guys arguing like you know we get obviously we do a lot of PR work right. So, everything is done by our PRs (PR = Pull Request, a request for an engineer to make a change to code or configuration), PRs into [Garbled]. The problem you've got is that you've got different levels of skill, you've got different levels of communication you know in terms of their levels of you know, it's obvious. No, it's not obvious type of thing you know that we get so much of that right. So, we've got a lot of we get a lot of run-ins between different and yeah and there's a lot of guys, who are like I did it this way. Last time, I did it this way. Last time, I my ways better than your way and blah blah blah.

So, we get a lot of that at the moment right. So, we've got a lot of--- and a lot of this stuff wouldn't happen if we all sat in the same place because it should be a 30-second conversations. We do, no let's go to the meeting room and have a quick chat about it. We get a lot of stuff, we have a lot of um--- the arguments that we have in our team escalate quickly. Escalate quickly, it is just like—

It is just like as well people are a bit more they can be a bit more I'd say brash or confident or Slack than they would be in real life then they say things and um they're in real life, I guess it's open to misinterpreting as well.

Interviewee: Yeah, so I can fully appreciate so there's a few things, right. So, basically we've got obviously we have some native English speakers, we have some non-native English speakers right. So, it's easier for the non-native English speakers to be on Slack, makes a lot more sense right because guess what? They've got to listen translate, listen translate this and translate right they don't dream in English. So, the question I have is a lot of people do you dream in English? You dream in English, well good. If you don't dream in English and you dream in another language right, it means that you are translating on the fly right? As much as you want to do, you're on, you've got a process of going right yeah. So, It is things like that. So, we've got a few of those right um so we've got to take our time, you've got over communicate, you've got oversimplify, you've got to you know redo the messaging every, you know do this, please do that blah blah blah. It's a lot of effort. There is a lot of effort to reinforce behaviour.

Interviewer: It's a good point and it's does that all thing as well. Well, this is just cultural but you have to tell everybody twice or more than twice and that could be frustrating especially if you told somebody just yesterday.

Commented [Author113]: Lack of the visual or auditory cues: It takes longer to resolve business problem in virtual teams due to lack of face-to-face.

Commented [Author114]: Manage conflict

Commented [Author115]: The language issues

Interviewee: It kills you about as a line manager in teams as well. No one understands the pain that you go through regarding one of those things. It's absolutely the most painful thing on the planet, right? [laugh] Yeah, you sit there going.

Interviewer: You just want to get shit done.

Interviewee: Yeah, it's like what the actual F, right? [laugh] Why am I here again?

Interviewer: So, like cultural difference is the thing, you've already touched on to one is like in Singapore, they are still a bit more hierarchical. All right then in Asia generally than London certainly and a bit of New York, so sort of language as well right.

Interviewee: So, there's a lot of that right. So, there's a lot of that, all right.

[Pause]

Interviewer: Right cultural differences is where we are at. But I mean people kind of say things like communication, working style, punctuality.

Interviewee: But it all down to people down so what's the thing we do this cultural – at [Name] we had cultural training. we had to do it every year because it was a part of the part of the line management thing, we had to have like cultural training. So, it was this and this case there's five points of cultural differences, right? So, it's your propensity towards taking risks. Your propensity towards having like the distance, the powered distance relationship or something that. There was a propensity towards, I don't know some other things, a whole bunch of other things. There's five levels that measured that and then we had to go through each one basically and basically look at a team and go yeah this team is predominantly like this because of this reason, this is the cultural and then you sort of sit there and it would actually sort from try and you sort of trying. A lot of it was just trying to like get into our head you know, trying to rationalize in your head why are you got certain types of behaviour from certain from certain teams.

It was so much, so they used to bang on about this. Like some Dutch doctor, who did this survey of cultural differences around the world in some 1980s, and he came up with these five factors. Yes, some Dutch guy so and they used to bang you since like every, like every [laughs]

Interviewer: So, you used to get in other [Name], we're not going to say it

Interviewee: Oh no, you say real one.

Interviewer: Cultural training, which is interesting, you're talking quite a big

Interviewee: - Ten thousand people, man

Commented [Author116]: The language issues: Information sometimes gets lost during translation in virtual meetings, but some people tend to not ask when they don't understand, and as a result the issues pile up and cause further problems.

Commented [Author117]: Provide cross-cultural training

Interviewer: - Yeah, I can understand why. They've got people everywhere um as oppose to – well, we kind of have here but not to that extent but--- I don't think I have ever done cultural training ever. Uh communication like I kind of talked about it briefly that one of the things in different between London and New York is generally the level of cynicism. New York is a very enthusiastic, everything is great.

Interviewee: Okay, so that if you find this Dutch guy who did this relation, this thing, you will everything. Actually, all the differences that you see between different teams and where they were is basically arranged in these five different-- these five things and you sit there going, right this culture has--, is more like that blah blah blah therefore the behavior you're going to get is like that that that that that, and you sit there, and rational it, oh that was said. And the other things the myers-briggs things right so we just sit there and go so one thing is myers-briggs were like you have certain--- I'm not saying certain things, certain individuals in the same would have certain like this right and I don't know what is that but it like [Garbled]. You know what I am saying?

Interviewer: All right, I know what you mean.

Interviewee: You'd have to you'd have to go through that as well, every year we would do that as well with some of the team. Some of the team, we do that. Sorry, I had mumbled a bit more around.

Interviewer: No, it cool. There's all stuff though you can pull out. You should let me write it down. **[03:33 inaudible]**

Interviewee: I mean it normal. I mean you build rapport with the people around you a lot quicker.

Interviewer: So, with the people that you're familiar with their culture.

Interviewee: Yeah, similar--- I mean it what they say, you are comfortable with people you have a comf--, you are generally comfortable with people who either consciously or subconsciously you are similar to, right and it does make a difference. Yeah, and that's all it is right. So, you know the closer you are to people in terms of the way you work, and where you live, where you work, how you get to-- I mean these are all commonalities, right. So, yes you share the same struggles, you share the same grief, you share the same problem, then you can be closer to them right. So, like Singapore you know you like Singapore doesn't get the fact that everyone in my team apart from me--- I've got the shortest commute at 45 minutes, right?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I've got the shortes commute [Name] comes in from middle of BF of nowhere, right I mean one comes in from freaking Leicester. Nearly, right? you're not gone appreciate that when you know the size of the country you come from is basically London.

Interviewer: Yeah, how does your communication with local employees differ from your communication with virtual team members?

Interviewee: It is a lot less. You know, I mean we kind of--- so, that's right because it's a lot more about-- but there's also a level of you know they don't have this. You know, because they're by themselves they require and they don't see you every day, there is a sort of sense of am I, you know subconsciously I guess they're thinking is this okay for me to do right? So, it's that level of it's you know that they have to have a lot more communication with you because they're just trying to make sure that they're not doing something silly right and it kind of makes sense to me. So, there's a lot more communication through slack email, VC, virtual. Yeah, I'll have you know one to one. So, usually we have one to one, so every Friday. Every, Thursday and Friday basically is one to one for me right.

Interviewer: I should just ask this question, here's one question maybe, what are your top three communication problems you've experienced? Is there any specific you can pull-out?

Interviewee: Uh, language. So, when we're talking about stuff and there are language barriers, that's one thing. Second thing---. So, what is sort of the top three problems you face when communicating? I mean language, um the sense of you know like if someone talks to me in a certain way, I don't offend it by it. But if someone else-- if they talked someone else in the team that way, they can get offended by it, if that make sense. Yeah, I'm quite thick skinned. I think it part of being a Londoner, you are quite a thick skinned about stuff right. You just like whatever, just joke on but sometimes all the **[06:42 inaudible]**.

Interviewer: So, is this like we can joke around and like you said you only take certain things so very seriously. If people can joke with you and drop jokes that if I said to someone I didn't know could take offence. Sometimes I think, and I did something a couple of things similar in Singapore and I just got the impression a couple of guys I thought was being serious or you know didn't understand what the jokes were.

Interviewee: Yeah, I think here I think our leadership is quite. You know, again this goes down to the whole sort of you know the power distance relationship type thing right. We don't have--- you know leadership here is seen as servant, well I think is seen as serving more than more than it's seen as dictatorial, right. So, I think London, England has that sort of serving relationship which has good points and bad points. But then also like I think I think America, APAC for example so the Americas and APAC have dominant leadership,

where it's like there is an expectation that they can be told what to do right. Whilst we're sort of like what would you need me to help you get from point A to point B, right. They're like well do I go from point A to point B? So, there's just those differences, and so you're always changing the way you communicate right. You're always changing the form, the how and so those kinds of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, you've got one more problem.

Interviewee: Uh, so one thing is--- So, what have I said? We said the language, we say the sort of—

Interviewer: I know, you've kind of If you haven't got three, don't worry - is when the technology breaks down. Like I had to do one-to-one with [Name] at my last Friday and I wanted to get out the office on time, but slack just would not, and it took about 20 minutes for me to actually get a decent conversation. So, that is infuriating

Interviewee: Yeah, the sense of yeah, I think as you are the--- you are young, you're trying to get things done right. You don't need sometimes so tell your folks story but there's an element of I need to, I think that I need to tell you the full story because theirs uh-- but you don't need it. So, there is those types of things the expectation of what's required to make **[09:19 inaudible]**

Interviewer: Testing, testing, testing.

[Pause]

Interviewer: Right, so we are testing. Can you hear me? Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, it looks likes It's going.

Interviewee: Okay, so it was the problems right. So, you got the first problem is so communication problem in terms of technology yeah, when that fails you're kind of screwed. Uh timing in terms of you know, it's the end of your day, it is the beginning of their day, it is the uh, why do I have to stay back for two hours when I can't stay that for two hours, blah blah blah and all that stuff. I hear a lot of that. Three, what is important for them to tell you the story, it is very important for them for you to make the decision. Is it important for them to-- you know, what do you expect them from the communication right? So, for me my nuts and bolts are, how do I get you moving quickly? All right, so what do I need to unblock for you, right? I don't need to know the full story, just tell do you need a decision? Where do you need unblocking? Where would you need that? Let's get to the point, but sometimes and that's really bad because I should actually listen to the problem and you know it's like do I

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Commented [Author120]: Lived experiences of differences in cultures

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teach you how to fix or do I fix the problem for you? Right now I fix the problem, I don't teach you how to fix.

Interviewer: Is that time thing?

Interviewee: Yeah, it is the time thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, there's no time and enough resources.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: So, you've got a guy over there in different time zone, thousand miles away. You kind of got to trust it to get him, you know how do you handle that compared to a local virtual team?

Interviewee: So, I mean a lot of that stuff is about PRs (Pull Requests), right so you don't commit. So, CRs (Change Requests) and PRs are the only way that we get things done. So, effectively once you have been able to do a bunch of PRs correctly, we trust you, right. If we trust you, then we give you the keys to production, we give the keys to UAT [User Acceptance Test] and I mean you access your SSH key. SSH key is put onto boxes, those types of things.

Interviewer: So...What is PR?

Interviewee: Pull request.

Interviewer: [laughs] I should have known. But is it different? So, do you give teams virtual team or teams in different location more PRs or less PRs or CRs unless they are in same location.

Interviewee: No, it is a repo (repository). So, the basically general repo right and we all work all different ethics.

Interviewer: So, you have the same access.

Interviewee: So, everyone has the same access to that repo right. So, and then you have to submit PRs to that repo, this is what I believe we need to do in terms of maybe changing some variables or blah blah. There are other people in the team review it and once everyone is reviewed it and everyone is happy with it, you merge.

Interviewer: So, actually yes so there's a group reviews not just you that does reviewing.

Interviewee: The team t reviews. So, you have to pick at least two people to review your stuff yeah and if it's big, if it's bigger than God knows how many lines and you need more people, if it's more than one person that type stuff, right. So, we have a lot of rules around that so you know you can't dismiss comments, you can't dismiss you know reviews. You've

got to respond back. So, we have a lot of rules around the way that we work which kind of sort builds that trust. It can be broken in that I mean people have smashed trust pretty quickly by just doing one thing wrong and something like we're back to square one.

Commented [Author123]: A breach of trust can negatively affect communication and work outcomes.

Interviewer: But I mean are you more likely to give people the benefit of the doubt, locally than remotely I suppose? If somebody could does something wrong in Asia twice and you weren't there.

Interviewee: So, Asia, so the thing I've got in Asia I've got very senior guy there who kinds of does the patrolling if that makes actual sense. You saying basically means we sit around- -- He is [Name]. So, were like [Name], you know what? Make sure that whatever is coming in, you've checked in and you're okay with that. The reason why we trust [Name], he has been with us for two years. He has been with us for two years. He is based in Singapore right, we know what he is doing. If he calls in, 100 percent of the time, he's [Name] we've got--- [Name] here as well he's one of our senior guys right. He patrols around London, we don't have that sort of patrol in New York. So, we're trying to build that person.

Commented [Author124]: Trust is a journey over time

Interviewer: That is interesting. So, you talk about there is still this period you have to have before you can say you know what [Name], will tell me if something is going on. If something is going on with [Name], I know [Name] will tell me when we speak tonight - which was about two years.

Interviewee: Yeah, it has taken about a year. It has taken me at least a year for them to carry on to those positions right. But now they've taken those positions, they are I mean they're the founding fathers of what we've done. If they don't know, no one else does right. So, it gets to that point where you look at the guy go where you call it right what's happening.

Interviewer: And interesting with them as well, so kind of unique to us is that they are literally founding fathers. They built it. So, it's not like they came along halfway through.

Interviewee: They built it right, so which means that the the problem you've got though is that they are always going to be the guys that built it.

Interviewer: Um how do you motivate your team members remotely? And how do you try and build relationships with virtual teams?

Interviewee: It's just constant communication. VC constant blah, how do you motivate? Yeah, it's the constant questions, the one-to-ones. The ones who aren't-- what you need or how do I help you? What do I do? You tell me, blah blah blah, it is building that--- so you don't lead by telling, you don't motivate by telling. You motivate by listening I think. So, it's like well you ask them a bunch of questions and see what their responses are right and then

take actions. And be you know so how'd you build trust right? You do what you say you're going to do, you do it quickly, you react, you know you show empathy, I mean that those things that build trust you have to do those.

Interviewer: So we are good. So, we move to objective three. So, I guess the difference is or what are the differences to you between managing a global virtual team, and a traditional team? Probably kind of touched on that.

Interviewee: I just think, one of my old bosses, you guys the difference is walking the floor right. Here, they can see me. They can see you and that kind of gives you a little bit of, it puts peace because they can see. If they need you, they know how to grab you right. But I think when you're working virtually, and there is no line or if there's no sort of leadership presence, you have to make yourself present somehow either through VC, through whatever it is and that's a lot of work right. Here you don't have to do a lot. It's not a lot of effort to be present, you have to be in the office and be seen but to be present in Singapore and New York, those time zones are out there, you need to be there you know, they only get half an hour with you which means they want to get stuff off their chest quickly right.

And you've got to react quickly because if they are coming in in 12 hours' time, so you will see what they have done within 12 hours right. They do not they don't understand that you've got a full day of work ahead of you right. So, you wake up in the morning go to Singapore, you take a bunch of actions away from them right, then you've got London coming in. You've got a whole day last little stuff, then you've got a New York, and then you've got to do all the stuff you need to do before Singapore comes online. So, yeah that's the stuff. You know right, it is just hard work. If you want team just in London, you sort to ask them what do you want?

Interviewer: And one things I think as well, it's a lot has to be a lot more formal. So, if my [Name] wants to just talk about something, he has to say [Name] can we have a chat now? He has to book a meeting whereas you know if [Name] or [Name] needed to tell me something, it is just like can we just have a word. So, it so very formal. Other specific things global virtual managers do at different times. For example, the star of, the end of a project. Oh I see, and so yeah I mean what do you do at the start, end of a projects with different time zones.

Interviewee: Oh, that is sprint planning. So, when we do sprint planning, we do sprints so now we have to do three sets of sprint planning rather than just one. Because you do Singapore sprint planning, do London's sprint planning, do New York sprint planning and then do one set of everyone together, are we happy with the sprint start and then the end of

it, the retrospectives. One set, one retrospective. Singapore one retrospective, London, one retrospective, One retrospective New York, One retrospective globally. Everything is done three times in three different time zones virtually or locally. So, pain so bad but that's life.

Interviewer: And there's no way technology can change that. It's physics, its rotation [laughs], it is night time in Singapore.

Interviewee: So, I could tell you know what; we got a fully distributed team right. So, what I have in London, I have scrum master in London, who's [Name]. I have a scrum mater in New York and then you guys handle the scrums. But then at some point, it's all going to have to come back together at some point. Yeah, at some point those three scrum masters have to get together and figure out what is going on. So, I can push that down. It just means I'm adding more people and I don't think the organization is ready to take on that many people to run a team of nine people and it doesn't make any sense.

Interviewer: Yeah, it costs you. You end up with the leadership team being more **[09:19 inaudible]**

Interviewee: Yeah, I had a line manager in New York, I've a line manager here. I have a line manager in New York, line manager in Singapore, line manager here. Yeah, a scrum master in New York, One here and one there. Now I've got three. I said I have nine direct reports, I've got down to three. So, I could I could shelve the noise. I really could right, but what's the point in having three line managers for a team of nine people?

Interviewer: Well, you could argue because geography because they are separated. And it's the same as me it's like well you know only what two people in Singapore, I can make one of them team lead. But it sounds completely overkill. But then at the same time that means it cuts down noise.

Interviewee: Right, yeah and it gives you time to think and maybe I have to you start doing that, I don't know man. I really don't know.

Interviewer: I mean I think if we do more, I am going to try and do that. Blah blah blah, objective **[10:133 inaudible]** so, how many it so how many years of global virtual management experience have you had?

Interviewee: 2005.

Interviewer: So, yes and what managing teams big teams?

Interviewee: No, I started with a virtual team in [Company] team in India in 2005 and then yeah I was starting and been the rest of us come through, so 14/15 years.

Interviewer: Uh, long enough.

Interviewee: Feels like. [laughs]

Interviewer: So, how has your experience helped you to do your changes you mentioned above?

Interviewee: It does not. It just like it gets the point where you just look at it guy, I don't know yet. You know, like people write books and blah blah blah and I'm like, listen man is—

Interviewer: You got to do it.

Interviewee: You just yeah just got to be done right. I can sit there and opine about it. It just needs to be done right.

Interviewer: Do you think it would make a difference to your job as a global manager if you have no first experience.

Interviewee: It does man, massively. You will see them struggle, the rational. You sit there and try and figure out why are you having those-- you won't know, you'll see symptoms, but you won't understand routes. So, you'll see the symptoms of all the stuff going on, but you won't be able to say the route of the problem is because of that right and then you sit there going okay can I fix that, no I can't. Right, you know what? I'm just going to explain to everyone that's not going to be fixed, deal with it.

Interviewer: What do you think managers need to be effective in this area? So, what kind of skills and attitudes?

Interviewee: I think a lot of it is around the empathy, right. It's about building empathy, it is about building trust, it's about doing what you're going to say you're going to do, doing it properly, keeping making sure everyone is informed, overly communicating. You know trying to keep the peace, you've got to be the ultimate parent.

Interviewer: Uh, the most important skill. So, you know what's the most important? And I guess it could be anything, it could be technological skills and all.

Interviewee: I think most important skills, I would say the desire to make things work right. The desire to make things work, waking up at 6 o'clock in the morning because you have to call Singapore right. Well as much as it hurts doing like a late-night call with God knows who, you've got to do it right. Because if you don't do it, the person on the other end doesn't feel as if they're a part of your team or a part of the company apart, then you get attrition, then they leave and then guess what? You're back to square one or do it again right.

Interviewer: Yeah, and you talked about empathy as well which I think is a skill.

Interviewee: Completely, yeah I mean I'm rubbish at it right. But like you know you've got to be good at it.

3. I mean, I think I am not very good at empathy. Once it was something [Name] said **[13:19 inaudible],** which was if we get a customer that annoys you would or you know you think for […] sake, what's going on? But you just got to remember all they're trying to do is succeed. That's quite a good thing to think, really sort of not thought of anything like that before. Oh yeah, you know that this guy let's say he done the same thing again, he is just trying to succeed. So, is everybody

Interviewee: Yeah, that sometimes somebody is just trying thrown under the bus. [laughs]

Interviewer: Okay cool. Um what do you think makes a successful management of the global team?

Interviewee: So, I think you just have patience, you've got to have the will, You got to have the ability to explain, you know you got to have the ability to spend time, you've got empathy, build trust you know do what you say you're going to do, you know quickly rationally. All that stuff right, I think a leading team and be leading virtual teams is the least, you get 0. No one is going to sit there and go well done. As long as you're happy, not being praised for you doing your job every day, which is waking up at stupid o'clock time to get to the office for Singapore stand up and then working some stupid o'clock because Singapore needs to go online in 6 hours' time and they need all the stuff done. All right, it's a thankless task right. You want thanks, you don't want to do this. You want to be praised you don't want to do this.

Interviewer: Everyone is in their own little bubble, aren't they? Singapore is in their own little bubble, they only see you for the bit that they see you. New York - nobody sees you for the whole day.

Interviewee: Yeah, no one sees the pain you go through every single day.

Interviewer: Uh, there are some - last one which is like how important is following for effective global virtual management?

Interviewee: Getting the right people, people yeah agreed. Yep, it is 3,4,5, 2,1

Interviewer:

Interviewer: [15:42 unintelligible]

Interviewee: So, 3,4,5,2,1

Commented [Author135]: Time management skills

Commented [Author136]: Show empathy

Commented [Author137]: Build trust

Commented [Author138]: Time management skills

Commented [Author139]: Lack of face-to-face

Commented [Author140]: Identify the right people

Interviewer: Yeah, a lot of people building teams right. If you get the right people as you said, you can, you know. If you are the right people who understand, you know if you've got experience of working with virtual teams or teams in different parts the world, they've got the seniority too manage their own emotional you know their own emotional hang-ups, I know [Name] is not going to be there 24/7, I will pick him out. You know, they know what to escalate, they know when to escalate, they know when to speak to you, they know you're busy right. They have they have empathy with you already because they know you're busy right. So, they won't waste your time all the time. I don't know if you grab those kinds of things. They will go on and stuff.

Interviewer: Cool. **[16:47 inaudible]**. Um, I think there is something else to add. I mean we didn't talk much about technology but I guess there's not much to say. It's slack, its webex, it is email.

Interviewee: It's like whether it is email, what's up.

Interviewer: You still use WhatsApp?

Interviewee: I use WhatsApp, I use FaceTime sometimes.

Interviewer: That is interesting. So, your team has your personal phone number.

Interviewee: Yeah, everyone has got my personal phone number. I mean just in case I mean something falls off, emergency right. You got an emergency call me right away, and I've had thing them call me. Like I've had [Name] call me at least two or three times right on my phone is like Joe got a problem, also production has gone down. I am like shit.

Interviewer: That speaks to trust as well. Like I trust to give people my number because at the end of the day, they are not going to abuse it.

Interviewee: Yeah, you have my number you can reach out.

Interviewer: Cool, I think that should be it. I am just having a quick scan. Yeah, I guess one thing. One quick thing, travel. So, you've been out to the New York office, you have been out to the Singapore.

Interviewee: I haven't been to Singapore. Yeah, I can't do 14 hours on flight man.

Interviewer: [laughs] It's alright but they and this is valid that they stopped doing business class to Asia now. So, you do only get premium economy, which is better than economy. But still it is a 13 hour trip and if you don't get a seat you like oand - I had kids behind on my way back. Yeah, so you've been to New York. When you go to New York, how did you find it?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was real. I mean I just found, you know **[18:35 inaudible]** there's no freaking point of the office being there. There was no one there. The whole freaking place is empty. The only person was in was [Name], [Name] and [Name] maybe and there's no one in this office.

Interviewer: Really, the same thing happened to me but that's because I went out during Thanksgiving. I am there two weeks or so.

Interviewee: It always empty right, I don't know what is going on in that place.

Interviewer: **[19:14 inaudible]** And then the guy on the scooter who—was he there?

Interviewee: He was there.

Interviewer: There's a guy who's got the scooter. He uses it to go on--- [laughs]I don't know, some hipster bullshit. [laughs] That is New York culture, so it is valid.

Interviewee: Yeah, and the only I feel they're behind as well. You could sense that like, you got do X Y Z right. Okay, all I'm doing is parroting what I've heard behind me because obviously these, the service identity needs to be shared by -. But so that's was enough for them, it was like buying. And they're like **[20:27 inaudible]** but like for us, it is obvious. For them, it's like a real sort of like you know what in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king right. And that's how I felt.

Interviewer: I know historically New York went through, in the thousands but after the crash this thing where people were being paid huge amount of money, it's very expensive for not that brilliant technology skills because they're all out in California. I might be prejudiced because I've heard this, so I am asked a question I'm like hang on, they don't have the tech that we have in London. But at the same time, really? Anyway, I mean but that speaks to culture generally **[21:22 inaudible]** [laugh] perfect, thank you.

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Interview number 3

Type of interview: Video call interview

Date: 28 May 2020

Location: London

Duration: 01:12:58

Job title of the interviewee: Managing Director

Gender: Male

Age range: 30-40

Team size: 210 people (based in London, Latvia, New Mexico, Guadalajara, Philippines and two locations in India)

Size of company: 560,000 people

Global virtual management experience: 10 years

Interviewer: Thank you, thank you very much for your help.

Interviewee: No worries, I'm always happy to help.

Interviewer: Yes, so, we'll start first, so, this is about global virtual management in the London Fin Tech industry.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: So, firstly, may I ask you, what does the term global virtual team mean to you?

Interviewee: So, for me, it would-- so, effectively, a geographically distributed team of people who needs to work together for some kind of common goal.

> **Commented [Author144]:** Geographically dispersed

Interviewer: So, how about virtual management to you?

Interviewee: So, virtual management to me-- so, I take it as managing people who weren't physically located near you and you normally didn't have any kind of physical interaction with.

> **Commented [Author145]:** Managing geographically dispersed team members

Interviewer: I see, so, from your point of view, what are business drivers for virtual management in the London FinTech industry?

Interviewee: Yes, so, there's been a big drive for it recently, as a result of-- some are in cost arbitrage. So, getting highly skilled people at different costs, because of their location difference, I think it's a big drive as well to having a global skill-- global resource role, just because there's a real shortage of specific roles in certain areas. And I think also, there's also-- we do it because of the time difference, so, it's much easier sometimes to get people to work, as opposed to getting people to work shifts that are out of hours, actually using a follow the sun model and physically moving them around the location. And then also, I think it tends to work well, because you just have access to skills that you wouldn't normally have in cities.

Commented [Author146]: Cost saving

Commented [Author147]: Access to global talent pool

Commented [Author148]: Follow the sun

Commented [Author149]: Access to global talent pool

Interviewer: So, is it the same to your company, or is there anything differently with your company? Any other business driver with your company?

Interviewee: What's that?

Interviewer: Is there anything else at your company? Is there any other business driver at your company to use global virtual teams, or is it the same?

Interviewee: It's probably the same to a large percentage, I think the major reason we use it, it tends to be a cost-- the cost of-- it used to be, I would say more cost arbitrage. I think the cost arbitrage-- it's interesting, I think the more that automation comes in, the less the cost arbitrage necessarily works. However, I think the whole thing moves in waves, so, I think it tends to go very much moving to a global virtual team, then you tend to get less of a cost advantage, you tend to swing back and they're kind of the onshore, offshoring movement tends to change over time.

And I think it's interesting, I think the different styles of work affect the efficiency of it greatly. So, for example at the moment, there's-- with the mood to agile delivery, there has been a big issue with having that delivered virtually. But then it's going to be interesting to see, with things like COVID-19, how all of a sudden, everyone becoming virtual, whether that swings back more towards global workers or not.

Commented [Author150]: Automation and the loss of cost benefit

Interviewer: I see, and could you please provide some details about the virtual management arrangements of which you are part of, like the frequency, side it particular?

Interviewee: Yes, so, I run—so, one of the things I run in my current role, I lead our global DevOps team, which is around-- so, it's effectively a DevOps platform for about 25,000 users. And for that, we have team people in London, Latvia, two locations in India, Guadalajara and the Philippines, with a total of around 110 people or so in those locations.

Commented [Author151]: Information about the virtual arrangement t

Interviewer: 110 people in 10 locations? Wow! So, how many-- do you have managers under you?

Interviewee: Yes, we have managers underneath so, I lead, effectively each region has a regional lead for me, so, in total, one in New Mexico, one person in Latvia, one in India and one in-- two in the UK, five directors. And each of them has sub-teams that sit under them, and those five directors, two who-- so, I have-- one, we can connect that we have all of the managers on a dial in call, same time zone, which is more troubling for them. But we're kind of lucky for the UK is in the middle, so, it's always perfect for my time zone, certainly more difficult for Guadalajara or India.

So, we have that once a week and then I have a secondary meeting with the service, delivery team, which sits in India, which is where all the resources a lot of resources sit it's about 45 people approximately, 45 to 50 but I normally drop into their team meeting, which is once a week as well.

Interviewer: I see, so, may I ask, what are the key challenges or issue that you're faced with when managing a global virtual team? Like cultural, communication things?

Interviewee: I think language and understanding is a big thing, so, stuff gets lost in translation or sometimes people won't necessarily either understand what's needed or they won't ask and they don't-- and it sometimes, and that works both ways, whereas they would raise things that I don't necessarily understand what they mean and they won't necessarily understand what I'm meaning. I think it's-- so, and I think the translation get slightly lost and you can see it where people aren't sure of what they have to do, and I think that's one of the big issues that people kind of, they've got it rough with working in a geographically co-located team.

People, I think, are often very sure of the overall objectives and the overall things that the team needs to do, I think you tend to lose that as soon as you become geographically dispersed. So, yes, so it tends to be communication, and I think that also manifests itself so far as-- if I have a team in London, my team in London for example, I can leave them to be relatively self-sufficient, so I can give them high-level instructions and they'll go off and they'll kind of do it and it will come back normally, roughly what I think. I think as soon as you start going to a global virtual team, you need to almost over-communicate because otherwise, you just come back and it's not what you had planned.

And I think that in turn has its own problems because you need to put in more time in communication, you probably, I'd say that you probably need to have more meetings with

the global team than you do with the locally based, which sometimes can **[unintelligible 00:17:31]**

Interviewer: How do you know when the translation is lost?

Interviewee: It's hard honestly, I try to do video calls, in video calls, you can tell a little bit more, and I think that I make a real effort to make sure that-- so, some of the ways that can tell, is we make a real effort to make sure everyone speaks and we did for a while, we were trying to-- so, one thing that I've done recently on it, we've been trying to use something wheel of names, as weird as it sounds, whereby we randomize the first speaker because I think that's one of those things as well when you go through a present piece where everyone talks. I don't think that necessarily works, but it's hard, it's really, really hard, and I think that's the challenging bit, it's you can kind of get people to playback what you think it is, but that's going to be giving that because it doesn't necessarily explain it correctly always.

Interviewer: I see, so, your solution is trying to do more video calls, instead of audio calls.

Interviewee: Yes, more video call and just making sure, so, if I do this with you, maybe I like trying to get people to explain what I told them back in there, so, I'll often-- at the end of a meeting make sure that people say, what are the next-- what do you think are the next steps Rajesh? And then Rajesh will read me back what he thinks he needs to do next, and I feel that sometimes makes it a lot easier. I'll often also try and leave the calls by asking them what-- so, with a lot of my meetings before I go, I tend to ask them what they think I should do differently? So, I'll leave the call by being, you know, what can I do to help you? And that's often when they state that they haven't really understood it, some of those pieces would come out there and it's hard, quite honestly, and it's interesting, because the geographic, the cultural differences come in as well, so, depending on the location you're talking to.

So, Latvia and Eastern Europe, so, I've done a lot of work with Latvia and Eastern Europe and they're very vocal when they don't agree and they will be very, very, vocal to a point where they're probably too vocal and they'll tell people they think it's a silly idea. Whereas moving over into India slightly, in India tends to just-- almost they have a yes and no and maybe and they'll sometimes do that and then you go over to Asia, so I've worked a lot with Singapore and we've just-- and they just won't tell you when you're wrong and that's actually quite difficult if you have [an] open a real problem to disagree with it. So, it's interesting, you have to be quite aware of the cultural differences between people and try and take that into account.

Interviewer: So, how did you pick up that cultural knowledge?

Interviewee: Honestly, see, just over time, I think it really helps, is one thing I think is worth investing, is physically going to locations, I think once you've physically gone somewhere, I think you can understand it a lot better, even if that's not necessarily even with that specific can prove it in general, it's the reason I take trips over to India because it definitely helps, actually meeting people and kind of go for a beer with them and getting on with them. And I think also once you've done that once, it becomes a lot-- if I think back to when I was initially managing people in Japan, and I've never been to Japan, it was quite hard, I never quite understood it, and then after going over there and then going to Singapore subsequently, I then understood the cultural differences quite a lot-- it's really to pick up at first actually, and I think it's quite difficult the other way, because I'm quite aware that they don't quite understand what I'm like, and it makes a lot, especially in India, a lot of the staff were never been to the UK and I think they don't quite understand what UK business is like until they come here or have someone from the UK come out and chat with them.

Commented [Author160]: Further discussion about benefits of physical visiting local offices

Interviewer: I see-- I remember I read in a book and they say that global virtual managers could be beneficial if they have first-hand experience, like the managing global team before. So, like you say so that you learn more.

Interviewee: Yes, it is, and I think the other thing that is hard to do is those kinds of spun-- and I think, it's not just with global, but it's just continuous conversations are slightly harder. And so, where I've seen done, just almost knowing there's people present over there, I think sometimes helps. So, we've worked once with a very large UK bank. And they had a set up where they basically put webcams along the decks, not like one on one webcams like this, they put a webcam over the area, so, you could at least see if people were in the office and where they there? Sometimes it's hard that the only time you can tell people are in is at the end of the keyboard always, but actually just seeing there's an area people, what they're doing, is sometimes helpful. But I think it is difficult to get the kind of spontaneous interactions that you would just by bumping into people.

Commented [Author161]: Evaluate the effectiveness of webcam

And I think that it's interesting, the move to remote working that's coming in at the moment, one of the reasons I think Google and a few other tech companies would push back on it to being the norm, is I think those interactions are at extraordinarily useful. Looking at Apple, they built the whole of their new Cupertino headquarters has been built with a large canteen in the middle, the idea being that people have these spontaneous interactions in the canteen and that kind of officially work. It's a challenge to make those work all the time.

Commented [Author162]: It's a challenge to build relationship in virtual teams

Interviewer: Yes, but for a virtual team, it seems impossible to have something like that, isn't it's?

Interviewee: Maybe, I think you can-- it's hard, I don't know. I don't think it has ever been sold completely if I'm honest, and I think, to the other challenges as well with virtual teams, some of it works, but with things like Kanban boards or visual depictions. I've worked -on of the nicest things I find when you get an office, and there's an agile Kanban board on the thing, and there's post-it notes and people moving it around and there's energy behind it, it's very, very difficult to do that efficiently on a global scale. You know, there's tooling and there's some tooling that mirrors the physical interaction between different people, but I think it's still not the same as putting a post-it note on a board.

As weird as it sounds, the physical feeling of doing some work, picking it up, doing it getting it finished then chucking it in the bin or sticking it on the 'done' pile, there's something to that physical interaction that's kind of-- at the moment is relatively unmatched, it'll be interesting to see if some of the advances in virtual reality and kind of a remote presence if that has an impact around it, I suspect it probably would depict something that's probably about the good 5 – well, I don't know - maybe a good 3 to 5 years off it having enough impact that it has real business change.

Interviewer: So, yes, take your limit as-- so, in term of cultural difference, so, what cultural difference have you experienced working in a virtual team, like you mentioned some before, but like how about working style, communication, and work speed and work quality, things like that?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely, I mean, so, big things definitely are willingness to disagree is one of the big things, so, actually, how much they're likely to say yes or no or disagree with you, that's definitely the biggest and I see the largest, willingness to disagree in western cultures, so, American based in Europe , in Europe everyone tends to disagree to disagree and then Asian culture people just don't really tend to disagree quite as much, even though they often have the same set of issues behind it.

Work quality does definitely change, although it's interesting, I think some of the work quality, especially in India, I think is challenging sometimes, the reality is that there are some so, where I find it I think pretty transparent, I find that in a lot of our Indian teams, you tend to get a few very, very good people and you'll have your team of 10 that you'll work with, you'll get one or two people who are extraordinarily good and there's a number of people who really aren't very good at all. So, I think it's quite different in skill set and in quality, and I think partly that because of-- it depends whether you use a virtual team as a

result of cost arbitrage or if you're just using it for your cost arbitrage, I think that it's not necessarily a good thing.

If you're looking for expensive skilled people in foreign locations, then I think it works really well, but you obviously don't get the cost arbitrage aspect of it. So, I'd say that-- I mean, in terms of breaks are interesting, I never quite realized going out to India's fascinating, so, I never realized how many breaks our Indian staff has. So, it's interesting the certain regulations that I just didn't know about, like if you're not allowed-- in the UK for example, it's very culturally acceptable and pretty much the done thing, everyone eats their lunch in front of their computer and eats and drinks [at] their workstations. In all the Indian offices I've been to, that's completely banned, so, effectively the people would sit, the only thing you can drink is small bottles of water and nothing else can be in your office, so, people kind of sit there then they all move over to a canteen, which is where they have it-- they'll have a tea break, everyone has a tea break together there and they come back.

These sounds really weird, but I never really realized that happened at all, and until physically going there, I didn't quite know what people's working day was like. I think the hours are different as well, dramatically so, India tends to work on the timing of about-- very few people in India that I've worked with are in the office before 9:00 A.M. I mean, it's kind of almost unheard of but they'll be quite happy to work past 7:00 P.M. and, so we don't always understand that the timings, and then I think as well people-- it's interesting, we've done a lot more remote work with India lately, and I didn't realize…..So, a lot of the folk in Bangalore, actually what they do is they stay in a hostel during the week, where they're in like a multi-room hostel with a lot of other people, they'll go to their job every day, and on the weekend they then go back to their smaller Indian village, which is sometimes a number of hours driveway.

It's really interesting and I didn't know that. I think actually, what would be an interesting thing… I definitely would be next time would be almost doing a bit of a show-and-tell trying to explain what people's lives are like, I know that sounds like a really obvious thing, but I think even having video calls, it's sometimes-- it's very difficult to actually understand the context of where and how people live. And I make a real effort to show people, like when-- as we've been doing lots of video calls more recently, I make a real effort to make sure that my team sees my children, they've seen a bit of my house. And I think that's a good thing to just understand the context behind people, and I think that helps slightly with cultural differences and the understanding of what they **[unintelligible 00:18:50]**

Interviewer: Yes, it's very interesting, especially with the COVID-19 around, so, how those people change the working and lifestyle at the moment? Like do they go back to their-- now, they're spending time in the hostel or they're spending time in the village at the moment, and how do they do video call with many people around?

Interviewee: We had one of the villagers, we randomly realized that people, they didn't have electricity all the time, so, we arranged an electricity generator to be shipped to this tiny village in India because they would only have electricity like 4 hours a day, it's unbelievable, it really **[unintelligible 00:19:42]**

Interviewer: Wow, nice job.

Interviewee: So, yes, so, it's interesting to-- we just didn't realize it's going on.

Interviewer: Yes, so, but basically, did your company send them electric things? Is it because you have people who work for you in that village? Or is it because you're going to support the village?

Interviewee: We have enough people working there, we basically, so, previously in India-- and it's going to be interesting how this changes in different locations, because previously, any remote locations, so, in India for example, we never worked remotely, there was kind of 0 remote work I will say. So, there is this concept of a special economic zone, so, lots of the large buildings that we built in Bangalore, Mumbai, and those locations, all locations are allocated special economic zones, which the Indian government has basically allowed a lower tax to be put against. So-- and you can only have that lower tax if you are physically sitting in that building. So, one of the big things that we had to do was work with the Indian government to enable a change, a greedy quick change to tax regulations to enable that for when people work from home.

And it will be interesting to see if doing this, if remote working turns into something that actually happens more in other locations, I don't know the answer to it really, I think partly, there would be a push to all that and I think there is-- I definitely see, with the technology at least, there is definitely a swing-away or there has been a swing away from global teams, I think they respond to more of a local management style, but I'd be interested to know whether that can continue, that swing or whether it reverses I don't know yet, honestly.

Interviewer: Yes, very interesting actually, but may I ask you a question?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Like when you say about audio, we talked about people in India, I remember, someone told me that for the same work, in Europe, we hire like 10 people, but in Asian countries or some country like Indian, we have to hire 100 people to do that. And one of the reasons why we do virtual team, global team is for cost, to save cost, what do you think in that way would the company really save cost, if they hire like 100 people to do the same job that you can hire 10 people in the UK for example, so, do we really...?

Interviewee: I think that's one of the really large change that's happened previously in-- especially within technology jobs, and I think quite a lot different areas, so, I think previously, there was a lot of-- so, if I think the way the world tended to work, you had these-- it was kind of like a bit like-- What's a good analogy? It was almost like building-- so, you have two options, one you build a house and you get like piles of sand and then you have-- manually, when pushing all these little bits into everyone, there's lots and lots of physical manual work to build this thing that you're building up and it takes a really long period of time, with lots of people pushing little bits together.

And I think traditionally, that's been the way lots of these things, so, it's all quite manual, there's a lot of-- or there's a lot of manual hand cranking, a lot of things, it's someone doing something themselves almost, so, it's me sitting here the day, I would submit developments back to base, it means sitting here, developing some code, but it's contained and there's a lot of effort and it's relatively-- none of the work is relatively hard like the difficulty is low, but the amount of effort is high, if that makes sense? And I think that's been traditionally a lot of what outsourcing was good for, so, like they want to be call centers or business process, BPO, business process outsourcing, but say for example, a really good example of that would be processing of letters.

So, for example, not much now, but previously, a lot of company-- like HMRC for example, would get large quantities of letters, so, what they would do, is they would-- particular letters, they get delivered to HMRC in London, they get automatically scanned, then those scan letters would go out to India, there would be a team of people of Indian folk that would read the letters, they'd work out what needs to be done, they'd do some input and then the letters would get off. And that was a huge building to the people, so, you've got difficulty, the difficulty is low, but the overall effort is high. And what I think has really happened, the dramatic change in the last few years, and what I imagine will be an accelerating change, is that the way the work has-- the work starts to change to-- you can get to a position where you up the difficulty but you decrease the overall effort.

So, for that letter example, what you would tend to do now to a large extent, is you would scan it, you would then put it through some kind of AI or machine learning, which would

automatically read it, and then you would-- to a large extent, automatically deal with a large number of those queries . And the difficulty of making that system is far, far harder, however, the total effort, because you're building it once, so, when it comes in is far less, and I think the high difficulty, low effort work, is far more suited to people who are more expensive and physically located near. And I think back into the analogy with software development, so, software development previously was a lot of manual hand cranking, what's tending to happen now is it's turned far more into building a Lego set.

So, I run the full stack engineering team for [Name], so I've got a lot of developers to work with me. And effectively, what they do more and more, is they'll pick Lego block S components of software and they will fit those components together. And because you're kind of able to fit these things together, you're able to put out fa more effort than what **[unintelligible 00:25:31]** and I think to a large extent that's probably about the 10 people versus the 100, I think that's definitely the case, I think the offshore teams tend to be much, much bigger to get the same result. I think now because the way work is changing and becoming-- everything's becoming - getting back to the kind of differences between teams, it's a lot harder sometimes to get over a complex business problem to a remote team. So, that's much, much easier to sit there and to explain how a bank works or how interest rate pricing exists, it's far easier with someone in the same room that has the business context.

And by the very fact that those people don't need to do too much more of manual handling, they need to do a small amount of really, really difficult work, I think it's quite-- there's an increase in cost-benefit advantage to having people onshore. Which is why I think the market has started to go that direction, so, what probably needs to happen is the offshore locations, I imagine will start to upskill, I don't know where they are at the moment, they're starting to upskill and work on the progressively harder things, but it'll be interesting to see how that goes.

Interviewer: So, may I ask you? How does your communication with local employees differ from communication with the virtual teams, like the tools you use, the speed, the way of communication?

Interviewee: I talk a lot quicker, so, one of the problems I have in general is that I talk very fast, so, I think I'm sometimes, I think I'm sometimes difficult to understand, even by local folks, so, I tend to try and speak slightly slower. And I probably use less colloquial dialogue, so, I tend to use slightly better English with foreign teams, and I try and explaining stuff in more depth, I probably use more analogies with my-- I'll do more comparisons to the things that they would understand. So, my communication probably does differ I would say, and I probably try to make it differ. And I also, I mean, I'm a firm

<div style="float:right">

Commented [Author174]: It takes longer to resolve business problem in virtual teams due to lack of face-to-face.

Commented [Author175]: Evaluate skills of employees in offshore locations

Commented [Author176]: Flexibile in speaking style

</div>

believer in - I'll probably go drinking with my-- I like to take people for lunch or for drinks or for coffee, I think it's a really beneficial thing, I would say I can't do that with people when they're supposed to be outside the workplace quite efficiently.

Commented [Author177]: It's a challenge to build relationship in virtual teams

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: In terms of tooling, I do a lot of white boarding…

Interviewer: White boarding?

Interviewee: … so, a lot of my day is normally in the office. Drawing on whiteboard effectively, they're a lot of-- so, I'm a very visual thinker so, a lot of what I do physically in London is having a big piece of paper in front of me and drawing things out. Which I've started to do more, so, I've worked out-- actually, one of the best things I've had out of all of this, I've worked out – I've found a good diagramming app for my iPad, so, I can diagram on my iPad and it comes up right on the screen which is quite good, but it's still… The challenge with that, best-- the challenge I find lingering is there isn't a particularly good multi-user whiteboard experience, that's as beneficial. And I do genuinely think the companies don't spend enough money on the tooling and the equipment that's needed behind remote work, if I'm honest. I think it's one of those things that actually for the-- If I was were to do a cost-benefit analysis and giving good quality things like shareable whiteboards, they can share between locations. Something like Microsoft **[unintelligible 00:29:30]** is very, very worthwhile and for the ongoing saving and benefit, it comes through **[unintelligible 00:29:35]**

Commented [Author178]: Using more visual communication tools

Commented [Author179]: Some thoughts about future technical enablers for global virtual team

Commented [Author180]: Lack of spending on communication tools

Interviewer: So, how about the use of email or instant messenger, phone conference, and face to face meeting. So, let's talk about email first, what do you think about the use of email in virtual teams, like in **some research** they say that people are overloaded with emails and it becomes inefficient.

Interviewee: I get huge amounts of email and it's unbelievably. I think email is quite an inefficient way of managing work. I think it's used by most companies as the default work, scheduling, and management method and I think it's probably a lot less than ideal. It tends to be used, I mean, it is used a lot and I use it. I don't think it's that hugely efficient. We tend to use-- personally, the best, so, we tend to use that, so, I'll use email quite heavily, I'll use Microsoft teams relatively heavily as a kind of instant messaging chat application. We tend to use JIRA as a ticket tracking and then all Trello boards as a ticket tracking basis. Personally, I think there's a massive, there's a really interesting piece around instant messaging and chat, I think it's something that most companies don't use well enough.

Commented [Author181]: Evaluate the effectiveness of email

Commented [Author182]: Evaluate the effectiveness of Microsoft Teams

Commented [Author183]: Evaluate the effectiveness of Jira and all Trello boards

I personally think there's a huge opportunity to have shared chat channels that have kind of robots to make work and roots to record work. So, I think if I'm honest, do I look at two quite successful companies, which I think partly are building the rise in things like Slack, which are easily affordable and easily understandable. I think to have some kind of-- you almost want this and let's chat substrate because it's beneath your company, but it makes it very, very easy to deal with integrations to other layers. And I think one of one of the major problems that occur is people built, you kind of-- I think there's a real lack of connectivity between the Greek where and the chat applications that are used - it's very difficult to get an email to go into a ticket, to go into a piece of work, I don't think there's enough integration, but I've been looking at the chat, it's probably the best centralized, way of doing that, but I think this challenge is around how I use **[unintelligible 00:32:00]** I don't think people understand why it's so useful actually.

Interviewer: Yes, so, we rely heavily on technologies to manage global virtual teams but like when COVID-19 just happened, was it I remember that there's some communication channel that falls down, what is it?

Interviewee: It's over slack.

Interviewer: Slack or what else?

Interviewee: That I used?

Interviewer: Or was it? I don't remember, these are communication tools.

Interviewee: I use Slack?

Interviewer: It's broken, it was broken down because so many people use it.

Interviewee: Oh, zoom, this thing Zoom.

Interviewer: Zoom and another thing as well.

Interviewee: Oh, Microsoft Teams as well, is it?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Yeah, Microsoft Teams which we use heavily - I mean we're the-- so, [Name] is the world's largest user of Microsoft Teams, we've got 600,000 people that use it and we're the largest company in the world using it at the moment, which is crazy…

Interviewer: So, your company?

Interviewee: … I think there's a lot of difference between the quality of different chat-ware and I just don't think-- I think a lot of it as well, is people who don't understand-- no one ever explains to someone how to use email. So, like there's all these really - personally

Commented [Author184]: Evaluate the effectiveness of Slack

Commented [Author185]: Evaluate the effectiveness of email

Commented [Author186]: Evaluate the effectiveness of Microsoft Teams

I think there are some massive issues because there's all these tooling's that we're given, that we're expected to know and people are just expected to know email, how to use it, and I don't think we spent enough time either teaching people originally or structuring out how stuff should be used, I think the majority of people don't ask and I think there's not enough-- they're kind of this base tooling that you need to do your job, I don't think is need to explain or works well enough or-- at least take it for granted that everyone knows how to use email, but I don't think they do, to be perfectly honest with you.

Commented [Author187]: *People don't know how to use communication tools properly*

Interviewer: But why do you think so, why do you think the people don't know how to use **[unintelligible 00:34:05]**

Interviewee: I think people don't understand-- I think in general, so, especially when you work with global teams, people don't know when you should email people, they don't know when you should use instant messenger, , they don't know when it's beneficial to include someone when it's not, especially when they are nervous, the thing I find when people are nervous, as amazing as it sounds people get nervous to email me because they see me as this really senior person and so they don't know how to write an email. So, they write these really long emails that just say nothing, you can read the fact that they're nervous going through and actually that's not what people want, people want short succinct bits of conversation, like you can be nice in it, but you don't have to give me this long thing, **[unintelligible 00:34:42].**

Commented [Author188]: People tend to be nervous when they email senior person

I think it as weird as it sounds, what a lot of people would be benefit from template things, so, rather than sending me this just abstract thing, send me what's the problem, what have you done about it, what's the solution. And just fill in a small template with three lines and I think actually that's something that now the places don't. And I think that would be a quite useful thing when we do it with development pieces, but we-- I find it really interesting that companies treat different bits of their asset library very differently, so, things like emails are treated very much as this free form communication and then you'll have things like the balance sheet for example. So, your assets will be treated as this very rigid piece that goes in Excel, it goes in SAP and it's very structured and then you have these free form communications that actually have a huge amount of value, a huge amount to information, but they're never really managed.

Commented [Author189]: *An email template is recommended*

Commented [Author190]: Companies manage their information asset differently

And I think companies - the whole knowledge management, becomes massive becomes how you make it remotely work successfully.

Interviewer: Oh nice, thank you. One thing worthy worth mentioning about zoom as well is a privacy issue, it turns out when people were using Zoom on COVID, it turned out it

wasn't very private, people were crashing meetings that-- you know. That's one thing to bring up as well, how secure is the tool you're using?

Interviewee: I think how secure it is, I think it's weird, one of the other massive issues I have, and I'm sure I can do a time and motion study round done, is people tend to use the default on all of these tools. So, meetings are the perfect example, meetings will tend to default, to either 15 minutes, half an hour, but normally people talk an hour or half an hour, and actually a lot of meetings don't need half an hour. That's the reality of it, but because when you first go on to this (referring to their Microsoft Outlook calendar), it fills in half an hour. So, people just burn half an hour in time, when actually what they want is much shorter and actually, I think there's a huge inefficiency, because-- I think one of the things that I'd be really interested, really, really interested if you change the default meeting time to be 25 minutes or 20 minutes, whatever you have, where people would have more time in the day.

I think actually, most meetings don't need to be half an hour, but people just accept this default of 30 minutes and the other **[unintelligible 00:37:18]** so, it's interesting, people, when they're presenting on global teams, they're all these-- people think meetings should be like a TV show, as weird as it sounds, so, people think that you should go, you should show the a document and this document should have a surprise like a TV show-- but it shouldn't, that's not what we're trying to do, we are trying to convey information. So, where I'm taking this, there's a massive thing to be said, by having-- at the start of when you're talking to someone, telling them what they're going to learn, and telling them what you're going to do and setting out in a very simple structure and the structure for conveying and presenting information is very different to the structure for creative writing, and I don't think people ever get told that, I think people expect that they want to write a creative story, rather than transfer information from one place to another.

And it's really interesting, so I'm moving to [Company Name] now, and they have the concepts of something called narratives, so, if you want to have a discussion, you write down on two A4 sides what you're going to discuss and everyone starts the meeting. And the first 10 minutes or the first 5 minutes sorry, is everyone just silently reading, so, everyone in silence all reads together what you've written and then you discuss it. Whereas a lot of meetings I go in at the moment, there's a kind of PowerPoint presentation that someone will skip you through. And actually, no one understands what they're talking about, no one really knows it and so, it's just a waste of-- it's very inefficient communication, especially the vocal team actually. There can be this illusion of

Commented [Author191]: There is a massive inefficiency in default meeting length.

Commented [Author192]: Provide training courses for online meeting skills

productivity, creativity if it doesn't actually-- don't really do anything, so, it's just people wasting their time.

Interviewer: Oh, very good point, thank you very much. So, also-- no, also, they have some very good points, I learned some as well. So, may I ask you, what does trust mean to you in the work environment? Trust.

Interviewee: Trust?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: That's a good question, it means I believe that someone will do what they say and it means that-- I feel like we have a degree of shared loyalty to one another and to … something.

Interviewer: So, what do you think about trust in virtual teams compared to local teams?

Interviewee: I think it's much harder to get, much, much, much harder to get, and I think it's a really good issue to talk about, I think it's much harder to build up I think you need to build up a rapport to talk to each other, and I think that's a lot harder to do [virtually]. And then also as well, in global teams, the reality is people have a certain amount of global team to their own location. So, people in global teams would definitely do things that benefit their location more than the overall team. So, you'll see people doing home behavior which isn't necessarily good for the virtual team but is good for the whole individual regions, we see that a lot actually. it's very, very hard to get a fully trusted global team going on, very, very hard actually.

Interviewer: So, it's harder and it's lower to build trust in virtual teams than local team?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely. Definitely, a hundred percent.

Interviewer: But how do you build trust in your virtual team though?

Interviewee: So, how do I do it?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: I think showing people-- I think a lot of it comes down to how-- it is the same how you would build trust in a non-virtual team, I think it's just the time taken to do it is far, far longer. And I think you got to try to communicate and be very clear about what you're doing, to be very clear about why you're doing it. How I tend to do it, I tend to do it by being very transparent about what I think and what I want to do and then I'll also try and show people a relatively unfiltered view of things, so, I'll make a big point, I'll tell people when things haven't gone wrong and when they have been failures, and I think that

that in general for building trust, i think being very transparent and very honest, I think it's quite beneficial, yes, that's **[unintelligible 00:41:49]**

Interviewer: Yes, I remember, okay, so, here's a question, so, by observing a virtual team and its behavior, how can you identify the team's level of trust?

Interviewee: That's a good question, I don't know if you can -- it's hard, it's really, really hard, you can't for certain. I'll be able to pick out individuals, but it's very hard to trust the whole team actually, very, very, very hard. I think, it just takes a very long time of working with them, so, I think to get a really trusted global team, you have to-- I think you can get in with a physical team, a co-located team, I think you can get to a point where you trust each other within weeks to months. Whereas the thing to do that on a global basis is-- you're talking like multiple months to years, you know what I'm saying?

Even then, it's still hard to permeate through all the team members, I think you can get to a point where you understand the leads and you trust each other, but to trust the whole team is really tough. And I think to measure it is almost impossible like I couldn't tell you how I-- or maybe it's because I disrupt some of the people I work with at the moment, but I couldn't honestly tell you how to do it I think that's a really good question actually.

Interviewer: So, how does a team with a high level of trust differ from a low trust team?

Interviewee: They are far more performing, I think a highly trusted team, the results, the performance, everything is vastly, vastly, vastly, vastly… And noticeably so in terms of the outcome, in terms of what they do. A high trust team is a very, very effective group, I think people that don't trust each other just don't work. And you can see it, there's definitely **[unintelligible 00:44:06]**

Interviewer: I remember one of my interviewees said that not only the managers need to trust the team member, but also, the global virtual team members need to trust that the manager is doing the right thing. So, what do you think about that?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely, I think trust is very much a two-way street, I think if they don't trust you, then you can't trust them, I mean it has to be, it's a share in the piece in all honesty. But it's very hard, and it is really hard to get a global team where everyone is genuinely doing the same thing, genuinely-- just, I think a lot of it is workable. So, how do I make them trust me? So, one of the ways that I try and build trusting people, is making sure that our-- almost economic incentives are aligned to making sure that for me to be successful. So, with my team in the UK, I try and make sure that the way for me to be successful is for them to be successful and then we both-- we kind of inherently trust each other, because if I want to go further they need to work and that they realize that and then I

realize it. Then you're both aligned in the same direction and I think it's very, very hard to get that alignment on a global team, I really do actually. It's not impossible, but it's just hard.

Interviewer: It's hard. When I do this research, there are some-- sometimes in companies, they share-- they have a global team somewhere, like for example, inside Hong Kong, Japan something like that. And different departments share the same things, or some time like for example, that guy, he has a team in Singapore, but those people also sometimes being asked to do something by people in the local office. So, let's say someone say that global virtual team managers, need to trust the people in the local office and not putting pressure on the team members, does it happen to you?

Interviewee: Yes. I think what happens a lot of the times-- so, there's so much matrix management, so, the team members that I have in India for example, although I manage their teamwork, in theory, I'm not the person that decides their promotions, so, they effectively have a kind of global management or a global management structure. And then they also have a local management structure as well, and I think-- yes, if I think with the best way for me of getting trust and making sure people-- I think there's an over-reliance on matrix management and having multiple reporting lines and I think that-- because all you know that the loyalties always will lie with the local management because they're the ones who decide pay and promotions.

I think probably a good way to do it would be making sure that the person managing the global team has full responsibility for those people. And that's sometimes difficult, it doesn't fit with the overall business context.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Yes, it would be difficult, when all the benefits belong to someone else, decision, not you.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Very hard, I see.

Interviewee: Yes, and that's where it becomes really hard too.

Interviewer: Is it popular?

Interviewee: Yes, **[unintelligible 00:47:50]**

Interviewer: Is it common, I mean is that common?

Interviewee: Yes, that is, so, a lot of the time, so definitely in large companies, you have a local management hierarchy, and then you'll have a global hierarchy that's inside, but the larger the company, the more likely it is to happen, so, you may now say-- If you're talking

about smaller companies. So, when I've worked with smaller companies, you kind of get situations where your staff **[unintelligible 00:48:12]** directly report, but there isn't a lot of very large companies, especially with large consulting firms, there's just so many different layers of management, it's interesting. And I think that's often a real problem and that doesn't-- I don't think that breed success.

Commented [Author203]: Less ownership over recruitment, progression and remuneration

Interviewer: I didn't know about that, thank you. And also, now we talk about motivation, how do you motivate your team members remotely?

Interviewee: I think you try and make what they're doing fun and that sort of thing, you try and make sure that they understand the bigger picture of why it works. So, I think that's always a good thing. I think to try and offer them-- people tend to like travel, especially over in India, I think they-- there's definitely a lot to Indian folks who like the idea of coming over to the UK, so, that's often a character we would use to do possible relocation. And you try making sure that they are-- that you try and celebrate the successes, you have to make sure that people see other locations as being the ones that did it.

Commented [Author204]: Foster transparency and accountability

Commented [Author205]: Offer travels

Commented [Author206]: Foster transparency and accountability

Interviewer: How do you build relationships in virtual teams?

Interviewee: Lots of communication honest, so, lots of regular chats, regular catch-ups, asking how their life is, yes, slowly, is the honest answer.

Commented [Author207]: Maximise communication and, where possible, face-to-face contact

Interviewer: So, what are the difference between managing a global team and a traditional team, like in terms of leadership and management?

Interviewee: I think it's harder, it's much harder to lead a global team, I'd say there's a lot more things that you need to bear in mind and there's a lot more complexities that go with it. So, I think it is definitely harder, I think sometimes those-- so, looking at the cost-benefit analysis of doing it, I think often some of those data batches aren't taken into account with it, it is definitely a hard thing to do.

Commented [Author208]: More difficulties, more complexities, more workload

Commented [Author209]: Further discussion about cost-saving as a business driver for global virtual teams

Interviewer: So, now I want to ask about the competence a global virtual manager needs to assail to be it, to be able to manage a team?

Interviewee: I have a call in 4 minutes if I can call back with you, if that's okay or 3 minutes.

Interviewer: Oh, yes, if you can call me back, sorry, it's taking longer than I thought.

Interviewee: No, that's cool, can I give you a call back at-- can I give you a **[unintelligible 00:50:36]** back quarter to two and we'll be back then, is that okay?

Interviewer: Yes, yes, that's alright, thank you very much.

[Pause]

Interviewer: I know you mentioned some before, but may I ask the question again then? Are there specific things global virtual managers do at different times, which are important? For example, at the start or the end of the relationship or a project review feedback for performance management, for example, is there anything you would do differently?

Interviewee: I think it's really key to explain your rationale behind doing things, so, I think it's really key to explain to people on that team the kind of why you're doing things, what your aspirations are, where you come from, what you're trying to do. Because I think sometimes, if you're physically in the same location, it's easier to work out. You have all these non-verbal clues, I think more, where you can roughly work out a bit more of what someone's trying to achieve a little bit or at least you think you can but whether you can or not is …it's a little bit easy to understand where they're coming from, and I think if you're doing it in a virtual sense, you need to over-communicate more and just really explain why you're doing something, what your career goals are, where that takes the team. I think you need to do far more of that in a global sense than you do when it's physical.

Interviewer: So, is there anything about from the start to the end of a project that you do with the global virtual team that you would do differently with the local team?

Interviewee: We would do it differently, we try and make sure-- so, hours is an interesting one - we try and make sure that on a global setting, because one thing otherwise, if you end up having people working really late or really early. I think that's problematic, so we do try and work out what time we should set things up –does that or the project that you do with work or global virtual team that they would know different greeting um the local team we try to make sure so ours is interesting, once we try to make sure on a global set, one thing otherwise at you is you end up having people-- sorry if I can just hear my kid screaming in the background. If you end up having people working really-- like apps, they like to work either really late or really early, I think that's quite problematic, so, we do try and work out what time we should set things, like that governance meetings up so it doesn't end up being like midnight for anyone is kind of important, you wouldn't necessarily worry about that in a normal location. And just try to over-communicate, try and explain what's expected from people, how long it's going to happen, why they should be doing it, that's probably some.

Interviewer: I see. Yes, thank you. How many years of global virtual management experience have you had?

Interviewee: I've been doing it since 10 years now probably.

Interviewer: 10 Years, so, how does our experience help you to deal with the challenge you mentioned?

Interviewee: It's just one of those things, I feel I've got experience in different races and cultures and I've been to most of the location that I would look at managing, I've got friends there and I understand the cultural differences really well, just because I've worked there for so long now, that makes it a lot easier. And then obviously, I think having experience makes it a lot easier to see the warning signs or see when stuff is going to work, see when stuff isn't going to work. Yes, I think it does make a difference actually, and I think it's-- I think for me, that physically going to places is really important, the fact that I've been to the locations that I manage people in is a really, really good thing for all of it, I think. Doing this and I've never been there is hard actually.

> **Commented [Author213]:** Experience helps managers to recognize patterns and warning signs

> **Commented [Author214]:** Experience in managing global virtual teams plays an important role.

Interviewer: I see, so…

Interviewee: And it's difficult because this-- if you are trying to move teams into remote locations to cut cost. it's almost on these difficult things that then all of a sudden to fly people to that location and really, it doesn't necessarily work financially, so, it does really help to have people there, it really does the trick.

Interviewer: I see, so, does it make a difference for you to do your job as a global virtual manager if you had no first-hand experience in managing such a team?

Interviewee: Yes, I think it is hard, I think if anything, you should manage a team locally first, and then you should go from managing a team locally to managing a global team. I think it's a hard thing to do at first because it's just hard, it's harder to understand people that you don't-- it's harder to trust people, it's hard to understand what they really want, and I think it lets you get some kind of idea on how to build the Ark, and that's much easier to learn when you've got people sitting around with you. Yeah, I think it is important to learn it first and then I think again, I think even managing global teams, depending on the location, set, well, if I find it hard to manage people in America, whereas I find it easier to manage people over in India or [a] Europe[an] country **[unintelligible 00:05:17]** why is it I find America suddenly more difficult, so I can get to what has things they're good at. I know I need to work more and I'm actually making sure I can manage America properly, it's interesting.

> **Commented [Author215]:** Roadmap suggestions for building expertise in virtual team management

Interviewer: Why do you find it more difficult to manage people in America?

Interviewee: I find that there are-- I think maybe it's some of the high performing Americans are very difficult to manage, because they're very difficult to trust like they are very much out for their-- the experience I've had is they're very much out for themselves and that makes it very difficult to have you know. I tend to be-- so, I pretend that this kind of like servant leadership style worked well for me, whereas I tend to-- I get the nest out of people by trying to make them happy and do what they want and kind of helping them. I don't think [it's] very good if you have someone who just wants to try and take advantage of it which has happened at some of the American places I've worked. That sounds like a massive generalization, but that's been my experience slightly more than other locations.

> **Commented [Author216]:** Virtual managers faced particular difficulties to build trust in virtual teams

Interviewer: I see, so, what do you think managers need to be effective in this area, like skills, knowledge, and attitude?

Interviewee: I think they need to be good listeners, I think they need to adjust their communication style to the people that they're listening to, I think they need to understand that. I think they need to have a good understanding of the people and they need to be quite a high EQ and they need to have a good understanding of people in remote locations to be able to do it well. I think they need to understand the tooling that needs to go ahead of it. And I think they need to listen really, they need to listen and kind of-- and I think-- one of your points actually before, is really, I think making sure that they build trust and rapport, has really been the key.

> **Commented [Author217]:** Effective listeners

> **Commented [Author218]:** Emotional Intelligence

> **Commented [Author219]:** Effective use of communication and collaboration tools

> **Commented [Author220]:** Effective listeners

> **Commented [Author221]:** Build trust and rapport

Interviewer: I see, what are the most important skills and attributes for effective global virtual managers for you?

Interviewee: What are my skills? I think some of it is the same as local management, but you know, acting with integrity, being honest, genuinely caring about your people is really key. Making sure you see people, no matter who they are, where they are, you see them as human beings and the same as you. It sounds weird, but I think people lose track of people, I think people forget that everyone's a person, they have the same hopes and fears and dreams, I think that's a massive thing. And then I think just making sure that you understand what's happening and you try to get to a point where you trust people to do the right thing, is really, really key. I think to get to that point takes a long time of building rapport and talking and stuff along those lines.

> **Commented [Author222]:** Be honest

> **Commented [Author223]:** Treat employees equally, with care and respect

> **Commented [Author224]:** Virtual teams rely heavily on task-based trust, of which accountability stands at the centre.

> **Commented [Author225]:** Trust: a journey over time

Interviewer: If you are at different locations, how can you build trust, how can you people like you say?

Interviewee: It's really hard, I think you do it by making sure that-- just making it, I think

would be by them being successful. I think its **[unintelligible 00:08:58]** anyway, just

way, if that makes sense.

personal, professional success to be observed.

Interviewer: I see, so, for the last section, this is a set of recommendations, to help managers to manage virtual teams more effectively. So, what do you think makes for the successful management of a global virtual team?

Interviewee: What I think makes it so successful? I think so many good things, so, doing things like video calls I think clearly helps. I think seeing people face to face and understanding them being human, I think is a good thing. I think getting to a point where you can build trust is really beneficial, I think physically visiting the locations or getting people to physically interact, I think is really beneficial, that makes a massive difference. I think if you can be in some kind of social event, so, we've been doing a quiz with some of my team globally, which has been quite interesting, we have like a multi-user quiz and we attract people into teams, which is quite good. And I think also doing events where you group people, not just by the location.

So, one of the things we've done before is rather-- is having work straddled across different location, so, rather than having a team in India and a team in Latvia, we kind of split it, three people in Latvia, three people in India, then we'll play it together. And then, splitting the teams horizontally across location, rather than vertically, I think makes the difference sometimes. The thing you want to avoid is having a **kind of 'us versus them'** mentality, so, where I see global teams not working, is when people are kind of the view that the London team versus the India team when you're kind of arguing at the same time as working together. So, making sure that you all have a common goal in mind and that your

Commented [Author226]: Compensation

Commented [Author227]: Compensation

Commented [Author228]: *Evaluate the effectiveness of video call*

Commented [Author229]: Further discussion about benefits of physical visiting local offices

success is shared, it gives-- it's really the key, shared success, I think it's the key thing, absolutely.

Interviewer: I like, if I understand rightly, then when you catch for **team working** and then you mix the team together like you mix London major…

Interviewee: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: I see, so, instead of fighting then…

Interviewee: Exactly, so, you want to make people feel like they're on the same team as the person in the other region **rather than just their local team** so, that way it's fun actually. It's hard to achieve, but it definitely works.

Interviewer: Very nice, and do you have any recommendations to-- directed to helping managers to manage virtual teams more efficiently and enhance their performance?

Interviewee: Yes, I think communication is key, I think what it really is making sure that the people understand when they should be interacting, when they should be communicating, and why, is really, really key to the whole thing. And that's probably the best, I think that makes the massive difference, I think seeing people makes a massive difference and I think however you do it, you need to make sure that everyone feels part of the same thing, that they have some kind of-- and having a shared identity, and I think one of the-- I've seen done really efficiently before, it's just-- I sound pretty silly, but sending people stuff sometimes works.

So, we've had one team before and we sent t-shirts to our remote team over in India and they just had the-- it just worked really nicely, they have the same-- the t-shirts, so, took the same identity **[unintelligible 00:13:15]** doing things like stickers on laptops, where everyone has the same stickers that's branded in the same way, I think works quite nicely sometimes and it's just something to mean-, you want people to feel part of a bigger thing than they're really-- you want them to feel like their team isn't a local team, but their team is-- that they've got a global identity that they're working towards that's the real thing, you can get them to-- they turn around and they say that they're part of this team, rather than this little team, that's when you won them.

Interviewer: That they are in the same group, of the same home together.

Interviewee: Yes, and it's really fun, the thing is that all of this, is as much as people have problems it's really fun working with a global team, because, actually it's really nice working with people with different viewpoints, and different understanding, like interest in life and different background, it's really good actually. And I think getting to a point that

that one realizes that it's a positive rather than a negative, it's really good, it's hard, very, very hard, but it's really good actually.

Interviewer: I remember when I discussed with you about this topic before, and you told me that one idea you think that people should do, is to always turn the video on when they have a conference call. So, it would help them to show more respect to the people that they are talking with, instead of shouting.

Interviewee: And that's the problem as well, otherwise, the people that do video calls, phone calls, everyone just does all the work, they really do. Like people sit there and they're working and it's weird to get up in a room together, people wouldn't just-- you wouldn't sit in the room and someone wouldn't start doing their normal day job, everyone sits there and everyone listened, but as soon as you're always on the end of the phone people start doing other stuff. I know that's the same with me. So, I think making--- I think in a weird way making on a video call has two benefits, one, you can see the other person, and also, other people can see you. And I think your behaviour changes when you think people can see you, you pay more attention, definitely.

Interviewer: So, for a virtual team, you think better use video calls?

Interviewee: Definitely, definitely, definitely.

Interviewer: Yes, so, the last question, luckily, finally, how important are the following for effective global virtual management. Firstly, an organizational culture, do you think it's important?

Interviewee: I think definitely, yes, I think it's very important, I think understanding the-- I think having an organization feel let down because they are not there is pretty [key, actually

Interviewer: I see, it's simply a performance management system that focuses on outcomes rather than activities.

Interviewee: Yes, definitely, I think that's for everyone, I think being outcome led is key to just live and work in general, I think there are too many people who seem to think-- it's not about the hours you're in the office, it's about the quality. And I think people, in general, don't. People don't understand why they go to work, I think people forget that you're going to work to do what you think is the right thing, not what you're being told, yeah – I completely agree with that

Interviewer: And getting the right people and building teams, is it important?

Interviewee: Yes, I think that's really important, and I think getting the right mixture of people within those teams as well, I think the highest performing teams I've ever worked through, have been when everyone has a shared goal and some shared interest, but they're not all the same. So, I think we are not trying to make a monoculture, where everyone is exactly the same, but like robots, we want one way people interact nicely. And I think to an extent, I think you look at how the better teams, I think are people that have got different viewpoints and can have some disagreement, but ultimately, all they're trying to do is achieve the same end goal.

Interviewer: But is it difficult to recruit people for your team remotely like that, to get the right people remotely?

Interviewee: Yes, it's much, much, harder, much, much, harder. I think that's one of the challenges that it's, it's one of those things like you look at some of the best teams, where people are-- they're not necessarily best friend, but where they get all of them, they're kind of friends and partners like a family and it's very difficult to get that working correctly when you're alone. it really is, actually.

Interviewer: Yes, so, how do you recruit the right-- sorry for the extra question, but it's very interesting, how do you recruit them?

Interviewee: How do you recruit what?

Interviewer: To get the right person for your virtual team

Interviewee: It's hard, so, it's really hard, so, that's why you… So, what I do this-- so, to an extent, I try to hire the same people that I would likely [] and that's people that are-- I would take people that are interested and passionate and want to learn, I recruit people that have-- that's kind of why I'm looking for really, it's the-- it's, there's no point-- so, I think in general, where you want to hire people, you want to hire where they are going, not where they are, if that makes sense, so, like I'd happily take someone-- I think you can get someone who's fantastic on paper and is really good, but if they're not moving forward, they're no use to me, so actually, I want someone who's going the right direction and wants to go the right direction.

That's far more what you need, and I think that goes in general for teams.

Interviewer: I see, so, you say already building and maintaining trust and effective communication are important as well, isn't it?

Interviewee: Really, really important, yes, really, really important.

Interviewer: Yes, so, may I ask you, is there anything else I haven't asked? Anything you want to share?

Interviewee: I think we've done pretty well, I think the trust element was interesting, I think that's a really good point actually, out of all of it, I think that's the one to me that's quite interesting. I think actually getting trust between the team is key, and I think that's something that I probably don't think of enough, to be honest. But no, I think virtual teams work very well, but they're just harder as weird as it sounds. They're really interesting when they work and the way to do that is just physically-- I really think there is no sub at the moment, and this is why the COVID thing is so interesting. There is no substitute for meeting someone for a bit, just once you've met someone, I think all subsequent interactions are better, or at least they tend to be the most effective.

So, how about how we do that in this new day and age, where you literally can't travel to certain places, it's a really, really interesting thing to look at. And you know, I think also thinking about the why does physical interaction, what if-- I've never quite worked out what it is that's missing from video calls if it's like the slight delay or why it isn't quite as good as being there, yes, and I think if you can crack that, then that would be an amazing, amazing thing to do.

Interviewer: If you're interested in trust, I can share with you the part I'm writing about trust. So, they're different kinds of trust, you'll find interesting.

Interviewee: Yes, I think I should really see that actually.

Interviewer: Yes, okay, interesting. So, the last information is-- okay, I know your age, gender, job title. Number of people who work for you? 110, how many people in your company...

Interviewee: 110, in the UK and about and another 100-- it's about 100 in the UK and a 110 globally, it's about 210 in total.

Interviewer: Yes, 210 in total and size of your company, how many people are in your company? It's huge...

Interviewee: It is now 560,000 people.

Interviewer 1: 560,000 people, and is…

Interviewee: Yes, 560,000 is crazily big.

Interviewer 1: Yes, it's a consultant firm, isn't it? Type of business?

Interviewee: Yes, consulting firm.

Commented [Author240]: Trust is a critical factor to virtual team's success

Commented [Author241]: More difficulties, more complexities, more workload

Interviewer 1: Consulting firm.

Interviewee: Yes, consultancy across sectors.

Interviewer 1: Consultancy across sectors. Thank you very much, that's it, also…

Interviewee: No worries, I'm happy to help.

Interviewer 1: Any chance you can introduce me to one or two people that I can interview?

Interviewee: Yes, more than happy to.

Interviewer: Oh, thank you very much.

Interviewee: If you need it.

Interviewer: Yes, yes, I need it.

Interviewee: Well, have a good day and I would see you **[unintelligible 00:21:57]**

Interviewer: Thank you very much. See you later.

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Answers to follow-up questions

Question: Is it possible to estimate how much does your company save up by running virtual teams compared to hiring 100% local people? (If not, please explain why.)

Answer: In percentage terms remote teams tend to cost around 20% of local staff - overall cost save is harder to calculate/assertion as depends on project size/duration scope. We also typically find that remote teams don't give 100% efficiency compared to co-located staff.

> **Commented [Author242]:** Cost-saving

> **Commented [Author243]:** Extra cost due to loss of quality

Question: Would you consider yourself as a transactional leader or transformational leader? Please explain. From your point of views, transformational or transactional leadership is more effective in virtual teams? Please explain why and how, if possible.

Answer: Transformational - my leadership style tends to be based around giving staff members a clear vision but ensuring that they have the room/ability to execute against this (without micromanagement).

I think you get much better results from transformational leadership where staff members are given large and long-term targets to deliver against - as opposed to being managed very hands on with multiple different tasks.

Commented [Author244]: Transformational leadership

Question: With the Covid-19, many global virtual team members are currently working from home instead from their offices as before. Do you think home-based global virtual teams will be common in the long run, post Covid-19?

Answer: I think that there will be a move to more flexibility - however I think that there is currently no substitute for face-to-face interaction. I'd imagine us getting to a point where people attend the office 3-4 days a week with 1-2 from home.

Question: From your point of view, what are the support policies and management practices companies need to provide global virtual team members who work from home to enhance their performance? (i.e. creating home office, work-related tools, gym workout, health and safety, flexibility, childcare, team-building activities, etc…)

Answer: I think investment in home-working equipment is very key - staff members who have a good quality home office setup are definitely more productive. I think it's also very key to encouraging exercise whilst they are working from home.

Commented [Author245]: Work from home

Interview number 4

Type of interview: Video call interview

Date: 2 June 2020

Location: London

Duration: 01:12:16

Job title of the interviewee: Head of UNIX

Gender: Male

Age range: 40-50

Team size: 50 people (based in London, Sri Lanka, US and Europe)

Size of company: 4,000-5000 people

Global virtual management experience: 12 years

Interviewee: So, later it might seem-- so, for me, I would guess a global virtual team is a distributed team that needs to work together as a team and they're based in different geographic locations around the world.

Interviewer: So, for you, is there any difference between managing a global virtual team and a traditional co-located team in terms of leadership, management?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely, I think there's a number of different areas that are different between the global and the remote team. Most of them come from the lack of in-person face to face, day to day communication.

> **Commented [Author246]:** Lack of face-to-face

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: And so, for example, there'll be these cultural differences between-- if you are hiring in a different location between how people respond to different work requests. How people say yes, in terms of some cultural differences or just to say yes to everything, even if it's a problem. The main one for me, I guess it comes up a lot in the system management side, with remote teams is the communication differences. So, that's one of the big ones for me, I guess to focus on and to understand what tools or what processes we can do as teams and team leaders to overcome and to improve sort of the communication between the team.

> **Commented [Author247]:** Difference in voicing disagreement

> **Commented [Author248]:** Effective use of communication and collaboration tools

Interviewer: So, can you tell me a little bit of the communication media that you are using?

Interviewee: So, communication media would be using a messaging software like Slack, would be used for instant messaging software for a quick nonvisual chat. In addition, we'd be using a sort of collaborative sharing software like Confluence and to share documents and work together on a single document. And in terms of trying to improve the communication sort of between team members, would be trying regular sort of video conferences, at least sort of a couple of times a week between different parts of the team to get the-- it's not as good as face-to-face, but it is good still to get there. I think it's an improvement on the communication to the other thought, which is, if it's just every few hours or every few minutes, for something quick, it'll just be a quick voice call so, voice calls are sort of quick and easy that everyone could be using between the team in different locations, but we always make sure there's a regular video call as well, so you get that visual time together where you can work on team bonding as well as the work that needs to be done.

Interviewer: So, do you do anything else too-- because of their lack of in-person, like your communication. So, do you do anything extra to make up for that?

Interviewee: Yes I guess, I don't know, in terms of **…** to try and sort of help and …I guess, what we're trying to achieve is trying to make it like as if, we're trying to overcome all of the differences of being remotely located and feeling included as part of a single team. So, for us, we're always looking at travel. So, for example, just the management, at least twice a year, we'll always be in all of the locations and to make sure that they're building relations and working with remote team members. So, that sort of every year, a couple of times a year and then in addition, throughout the year, there's always one or two team members that will be on secondment, so, they'll be traveling to other and working at other locations for like a month, for example, on a project together.

So, there's just a like a different sort of a couple of team members at any one time will be working in a different location as part of like-- almost like a rota, and sort of getting to know the team, and that works really well for us, getting that, that face-to-face time instead of building a bit of strong distance relationship, then you can continue over the video, email, voice, etcetera.

Interviewer: So, but does it cause inconvenience for people, for example, just suddenly, you have to leave London for a month, to live somewhere, to work and for people that have family, like they have a wife, they have children, something like that, are people happy about that?

Interviewee: We don't enforce it, it's for those that want to, so, some people really want to travel and love traveling as much as possible. So, the average team person would only sort of travel once every couple of years and then it's down to choice if they're happy just sort of to meet people as they visit their location, and they don't really want to travel, then that's also fine by us, we'll just sort of still keep working on other ways just to get to know them better, maybe spend a bit more time with an individual that doesn't travel when we visit their location to make up for the fact that they've not come to the opposite direction.

Interviewer: Oh, I see, from your observation, who do you think would be more likely to like to travel that way, and who would not?

Interviewee: I, yes, say yes similarly to what you mentioned, I'd say its family ties are normally the biggest restriction, which I guess is normally children, young children I'd say, is very, very understandably for the parents that won't travel or leave a single parent alone with the children for a month. So, sometimes, it could be that we'll consider doing a week or 2 weeks maximum, just like a small trip over and if they want to do that instead, we can work that. So, I guess it's normally the single people will always love to-- say will always seems to love to travel and they'll always travel and then as soon as you start to get a family, it depends to what stage the family is in, sort of how often and how frequent, how long and does the team members want us to travel for, but it's not super regular, it's just once every couple of years if they want it.

Interviewer: Yes, so, may I ask, does the family status, what's it? I mean the marriage status, marital status, the gender, things like that, does it affect the decision of recruiting somebody to a virtual team? Like when you recruit them.

Interviewee: Understood, definitely not.

Interviewer: No?

Interviewee: no, so if I hire people and they tell me that they are terrified of flying, they're never going to travel, that's totally fine. It's again, like I said, just means we'll focus a bit more on making sure that a number of people visit their sites and get to know them if they can't do the travel. So, that's definitely not something I would use to select people, I wouldn't-- that doesn't come into my criteria for finding the right employee with the right skillset and the right attitude, that would work for the team, definitely.

Interviewer: Yes, so, how do you support those people to work better in the virtual arrangement, as you say?

Interviewee: Yes, so, how do you help the teams to work better remotely?

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Interviewee: So, to me, we're normally doing things to make it almost as if it was a local team, so, we'll sort of providing cross-cultural training for the different team members because that's a very good one that I find really helps in terms of-- it can be all sorts of things that people just don't naturally think how people might act or respond differently in different parts of the globe. It might be the tone of voice people use, it might be sort of certain expressions that people use that have different meanings in different places or people's attitudes to work, not right or wrong, but just you know, some cultures will be... For example, in Italy, it was very much sort of one hour for lunch, sort of twelve or one o'clock without fail every day, that there's no exception, there's like everyone in the team kind of and different teams in the office with you know, clock goes, right we go and see you in an hour.

While in other cultures in London, it's a bit more, which I'm not saying it's right or wrong, but it's a bit more, people just like work, work, work. You know, work through lunch, just get the job done and so, it's understanding the differences and making sure that people don't sort of negatively judge or struggle to communicate with people from slightly different cultures, just because we're all sort of different.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: That, I would say is the biggest one, the cultural aspect. Then for me, in terms of leading teams of large people, the second thing is to ensure that there's good local leadership sort of team management in each area. So, for example, for me, I'll have a designated person who's the known published sort of local team leader, team representative. And that helps with me being able to sort of distribute work and sort of help through them to their teams and also, it sort of helps the teams to look after me and to have a sort of a local person to work with, that's definitely a big one.

Interviewer: So…

Interviewee: And, yes, carry on with your question.

Interviewer: So, where are your team members from, which countries are they from?

Interviewee: So, the original office is in London, which is about 14 people, then the second biggest office is in Sri Lanka, which is about 30 people. And then there's an office in Milan, which has a couple of people and also an office in Bucharest, that's got a couple of people, in Europe Bucharest and then there's one more office in America in Fort Mill in,

Commented [Author259]: Provide cross-cultural training

Commented [Author261]: Difference in taking breaks at work

Commented [Author262]: Be able to manage cultural differences in global virtual teams

Commented [Author263]: Ensure that there is good local leadership in each area

I guess South Carolina of America and that's got 4 people. They're spread all over the place.

Interviewer: So, may I ask you? Because we are talking about culture, so, what are the key challenges that you are faced with when you manage a global virtual team in term of cultural difference?

Interviewee: I guess for me, as a manager of multiple locations, so, the biggest challenge for management for me is that I have to work, I have to engage with lots of different people from different cultures at the same time. While sort of most people in the team will only need to interact one at a time with one other culture at a time, whereas I can, I might need to be having to communicate with 5 or 5, 6 different people all from a different cultural aspect. So, that's something that you get better and better with practice in terms of how you communicate and how you sort of responding and interpret different people at the same time and in the same conversation, sort of at the same meeting for example. So, that phase is the biggest one to overcome.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about one situation where it's the most difficult for you to cope?

Interviewee: The most difficult situation, with regards to the cultural differences or just generally?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Probably for me, I guess it might be to do with social distancing in the office, not the current sort of coronavirus social distancing, but some cultures are a bit more tactile, a bit more sort of friendly, sort of with touch, which is totally normal in one culture, but in other cultures that are very-- any kind of such touching is-- even if it is completely-- what's that I can't think of how to say it - so, it's completely, it's not sexual, it's not for pleasure, it is just very sort of informal, what work buddies would do in certain cultures, but it's sort of - it's not seen like that in other culture. So, we've had issued with when that's happened, occurrences in the past, I find that sort of the hard one, for me to have to work with the people involved, just help them understand how different people have different views and different feeling on things and it's a very sensitive area for a lot of people. So, it's quite a difficult and tricky issue to try and just help resolve.

Interviewer: I see, like in my country, it's very normal, even if they approach you and touch your shoulder or something like that, but in some countries, no, you cannot do that at all.

Commented [Author264]: Managing geographically dispersed team members through various collaborative communication technologies

Commented [Author265]: Respond and interpret different people from different culture in the same meeting

Commented [Author266]: Difference in social distance

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Or in-- sometimes they can have some naughty chat in the office and in my country, it is allowed, what year when I studied HR they said no, you cannot do that, it will be like sexual harassment.

Interviewee: Yes, it is so different, even when [Name]'s mum left to go back to China and she was getting into a taxi with [Name] and I was talking to her and saying, you know, it's lovely you were here and sort of opened up for a big hug, she just looks at me, turned around and went into the taxi, and [Name] is like no, a lot of time people don't really hug and touch **you know -** unless you've been in the UK for a long time, it's like a lot of people don't. I'm like okay, thank you.

Interviewer: I got it, so, in terms of like life things, as we talked about cultural differences, like working styles, do you see any difference in working styles between different countries?

Interviewee: So, any difference in…

Interviewer: In working style, like for example, one of my interviewees, he said that in America they work for 24 hours, then the company can call them anytime and they work, it's their life for example, but in London we are different, you have to confirm with the employee first, and then have to pay extra for the,[Unintelligible 00:18:15] So, do you experience any difference in work style?

Interviewee: Yes, work style, definitely, it can always be, individuals can always be different and there are always people of different types individually, but also on the geographical kind of scale, definitely, there'll be differences in the work attitude. Yes, some locations, that would be more-- yes, in America, they're kind of like, they're like you can call us whenever you want when we're home, you just call if there's a problem, call us, you know, no worries. Whereas in some other cultures like in Romania, in Bucharest, when we're hiring the people, they're kind of like, they're very much you can't-- these are the hours I work and I'm going to work super hard through these hours, but outside of these hours, you don't call me, there's no contact from work, complete zero, no emails, nothing.

And so, it's again, yes, you have to kind of understand them and get to know the differences between them and try and sort of organizing the teams so that it still fits nicely with people. Some parts of the team working on overnight support or different kind of strength, so that it's not a problem if there are certain areas that act differently.

Commented [Author267]: Difference in working hour and work-life balance

Commented [Author268]: Be able to manage cultural differences in global virtual teams

Interviewer: Yes, but do some people feel unfair like, for example, you can call me anytime, I have to answer, but for guys in Europe for example, no, you cannot call them at night. So, is it unfair, something like that?

Interviewee: Yes, I would say some people definitely would usually see it as unfair, and it's tied into trying to make the team as one big team, but ultimately, sometimes the team is very aware that they're different. So, for example, the team that you have working in Sri Lanka is aware that they are a lot more-- a lot sort of less paid, so, that doesn't engender, that doesn't sort of naturally make people want to sort of work super hard, you know after hours whatever you want because you're not paying very much. It's just one reason for an example, whereas, in America, the pay is a lot, a lot, a lot higher, more than London. So, it's almost as if while you pay so well, call it what you won't do it, you know, whenever you want.

But that doesn't **[unintelligible 00:21:18]** for the little bit, otherwise, I haven't really seen too much, where there's this different sort of teams in different areas have a problem or notice if other areas work differently. If other areas want to work out-of- hours or get called whenever and other teams don't, they still sort of get on fine. Everyone, I think it's if I, I try to help the team to sort of treat everyone, each other as individuals and then that sort of helping them to stop trying to make generalization against kind of like location or teams as a whole and just sort of treating you as that's a person that likes to do certain things or work in a certain way, and that sort of works quite well I think.

Commented [Author269]: Be able to manage cultural differences in global virtual teams

Commented [Author270]: Play to the strengths of the team

Interviewer: it's difficult isn't it?

Interviewee: Yes, it is, yes.

Interviewer: Well, I was just thinking about what you were saying, life people in Sri Lanka, some people, they don't work hard, because they think that they don't get paid when?

Interviewee: I didn't say they don't work hard, I just said they wouldn't necessarily go above and beyond, so, I don't think it's a bad thing necessarily, but I've also had people in London who got high paid contractors that were like, here's my start, here's my finish, don't even text me, never. So, it can be a very individual thing, but yes, I haven't had too much of a problem or noticed it too much over the year.

Interviewer: But even, like if it's lower - lower, living in Sri Lanka is lower than New York, or London is lower than New York, but basically, it's still a market rate, isn't it? it's just a bigger in the market.

Interviewee: Yes, and it ties into what we were talking about earlier with some of the issues between remote teams and this, for example, is one of them, is not just the pay but kind of where sort of skill set wise or status wise that the team is kind of seen fitting together with the other sort of 3 or 4 teams and that's a challenge that from day one I have to work really hard just to let Sri Lanka know that the individuals we know and work with, that we can't do this without you, this is really important that you do this, this, this and there's a number of ways to do that by doing these kinds of travel or projects, even if they're remote projects, working with remote people in different areas it just gets them sort of working together to try and make them more on an equal level, to try and take away from the reality of different areas having different skill sets or status.

Interviewer: Talking about this, one of my interviewees, said that he manages lots of guys in India, but this he said that although that they're doing that because of cost is low, but the quality of Labor's over there is not so great. So, instead of hiring like 10 people to do a job, they have to hire like 100 people for example, so, does it happen the same with you? Like the skillset in different areas are different, even in the team?

Interviewee: Yes, again, there are always individual exceptions, and I can sort of-- can think of people in every single location who are smarter than me and are amazing employees. But they're definitely looking at a trend, then yes, they're sort of the cheaper, normally sort of the cheaper location, they're cheaper. One of the reasons actually, is – er – the quality a bit, so, yes, I would say I definitely agree that I've seen that my team's sort of working in both ways, in terms of doing a job where sort of 10 London employees or doing the job with sort at times with or sort of like 4 London employees and then about sort of 20 Sri Lanka employees, so, there is definitely a trade-off in terms of the skill level of the hires to do the jobs.

Interviewer: So, does it happen in the way that for example, the same position in the same team, but you allocate different kinds of work for different locations for some of the more difficult jobs for New York or something?

Interviewee: Yes, definitely, so, for example, we had-- so, Sri Lanka is more of an operational team, so, they were running and doing day-to-day work requests, whereas in London and in America, in Fort Mill, the resources were a lot more, they're where the resources were a lot more technical and sort of higher-skilled, they were more to the second line, the third line and sort of support and sort of engineering, so they'd be doing the more complex architecture, engineering sort of designed for the work and working with the Sri Lanka team. So, there would always be some overlap between teams to try and

share skills and to sort of improving skills, but generally, the London and the US would be sort of for high skilled Engineering and more operational.

So, that which sorts of fits with getting the whole-- ball of the work that needs to be done, some of it is operational, some are engineering. So, it can work quite well and you can just use the differences as opportunities to identify those team members that are really strong and there might be, say Sri Lanka resources that are-- so, some, for example, come over and they were working in London for 6 months on this secondment and by the end of the 6 months there, as far as I'm concerned, they're more than equal, some of them better than some London resources. So, different locations were definitely used for different purposes, different workloads.

Interviewer: Yes, I see, so, from your point of view, what are business drivers for virtual management in the London FinTech industry?

Interviewee: The biggest one I would say is-- I won't say cost, I'll say the perception of cost because I think there's a difference, I think a lot of teams get fully or partially sort of offshored moved abroad to cheap-- to locations where staff are cheaper to hire, but then the companies don't look enough at the actively, the actual cost, the reality of what the extra work that is created by having like a larger team of different or lower-skilled resources, then you need more and more people to do the same job and also, [monitor] the quality of work to get it done. And I think it tends to reduce cost is normally the biggest one because companies I guess, don't normally-- it's quite hard to know, to get it perfect as to which things can be-- which work can be done with very low skill and which can. So, there's normally a gray area in the middle where certain work is pushed abroad but was too difficult, was too critical for this to be done. Whereas other work is perfect, so, the more first line work works really well in offshore resources, yes, definitely.

Interviewer: So, perception of cost.

Interviewee: Yes, so, the cost is the first one, the second one for remote team, from me, I would say it's around having the follow the Sun model. So, by having people in America and Sri Lanka and London, it allows me to have members awake, online, working for a near sort of 24-hour, well, it is 24 hours period, so, that really helps with improving the availability of-- and the quality of support that we can give to those company. So, yes, follow the sun's really good. And also, I'd say almost like the opposite, but sort of related to the hiring of cheap, low skilled resources in location. It's also, I'd say we have remote teams where we find we want to hire highly skilled resources, but not in our location.

Commented [Author272]: Play to the strengths of the team

Commented [Author273]: Further discussion about cost-saving as a business driver for global virtual teams

Commented [Author274]: Enhance global presence in diversified geographic locations

So, for example, when we hire in Bucharest, in Romania, in Europe, we're able to hire really good technical resources that in certain technologies aren't available, for example, in London. So, it allows us to find resources around the world that don't have to be in London that we need and so, that works well for us, I think.

Commented [Author275]: Access to global talent pool

Interviewer: Yes, so, there are three key business drivers you think.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Also, may I ask you, do you have any experience, any difference on any issue in communication, like communication speed or using email and things like that?

Interviewee: Yes, I've seen a number of occasions of miscommunication, but between team members and myself at times as well. Because every-- different languages, different cultures kind of work differently, and certainly as an English speaker, you start to realize that English has a lot of-- well, I don't know what the English expression is, but you have a lot of terms and phrases that literally don't make sense, that's quite hard to explain or make sense, into the – it's only when you're sort of emailing, that actually gets lost in translation. And then also again, just the communication-wise, some of the cultures are very direct, very short and very sharp, which isn't good or bad, it's a difference, whereas others are a lot slower, a lot more of please, please, please, thank you, thank you, thank you. So, it kind of-- that can be a bit of a clash or there needs to be work to understand between both of them how it's just the way different people with different cultures or languages communicate differently. Yes, but I've definitely seen a lot of examples of that here.

Commented [Author276]: The language issues

Commented [Author277]: Difference in speck etiquette and mannerism

Interviewer: So, how did you manage that?

Interviewee: So, that goes back to when we're working with the team, setting them up for managing them, where we're working on the cross-cultural training as a sort of regular thing, not just at the start, but also like a routine, at least once a year kind of catch-up refresher that we sort of do in different ways to get the team engaged, make it sort of fun, like sort of training that helps people remember it and, sort of, pay attention to it and show them the benefits to helping each other to communicate better and how people can help each other for the better if they understand the differences.

Commented [Author278]: Provide cross-cultural training

Interviewer: So, when you say catch up, then once a year, so, their people come to London?

Interviewee: No, so, the training is a mixture of some online courses, sort of internal training courses, and then also, there'll be some sort of video conferencing together for

those. And then for each location, they'll then be physical local training for the local team together, so, they'll sort of do it together as the local group.

Interviewer: so, the local office would do that?

Interviewee: Yes, so, it would be slightly different in each location, because obviously of the different combination of remote teams there.

Interviewer: Yes, also, for performance review, are you in charge of doing performance review and promotion things for your team members, like in Sri Lanka, and in **Milan** or the global manager over there will take care of that bit?

Interviewee: So, that would be a combination of-- I'm ultimately responsible for it, but I delegate to my local team leads in each location. So, the personal reviews, for the 50 people, performance reviews will be based on a combination of what the local leads have put together and recommend and then sort of which were probably be by 80% of the recommendation and then the process and then for about 10% update for myself as my own interactions with the team members. And so, it's mostly done by the local team leads and I'm just there to balance it across all of the locations, make sure it's an equal level.

Interviewer: But the local team lead is supporting aid in this?

Interviewee: Yes, yes, because I wouldn't be able to do 50 people, definitely too much.

Interviewer: No, because… I asked this question, because one of my interviewees, he said that because he's a big firm, so they have a global manager at the local office and those people will take care of the promotion and bonus and benefits for his team's. So, basically, he kind of lost infection on their own team member.

Interviewee: Yes, and I can understand that. There was a time where one of the offices was like that, they had the local location sort of lead that would be the equivalent to say sort of my boss or my boss's boss. And yes, like you say they looked after the performance reviews and he only inputs for me for a short time until the change was almost like a-- here are the performance reviews, okay, yes, okay, right. Yes, so, there wasn't a lot of input from me, which then makes it hard as a global manager, when you're trying to help influence global team members.

We've got the motivation, training, developing, something that you want to do as a global, so the strategy might be very different towards the local lead, what his responsibilities, what his intentions, desires, are and they take it very differently. And so, yes, for me it was very important to get the resources and sort of reporting up, to make sure the performance

Commented [Author279]: Provide cross-cultural training

Commented [Author280]: Provide cross-cultural training

Commented [Author281]: Delegate performance reviews to local team leads while global managers remain decision-makers

reviews are done by the management structure of the services, not by the location of which office you sit in, yes, definitely.

Interviewer: It works better that way, isn't it?

Interviewee: Yes, yes, yes, definitely.

Interviewer: Yes, so, I'm going to ask you about-- so, what does trust mean to you in your working environment?

Interviewee: What does...?

Interviewer: Trust, T-R-U-S-T.

Interviewee: Yes, I can say everything, yes, trust is a very important one for me. I think it sort of fits into every area, it fits into every sort of conversation, every interaction that the team members have from-- so, one of the company values that I-- that we've sort of adopted as a repeat of the, like a really strong number one for the process, it was sort of "my word is my bond", which is if you say you're going to do something, you'll do it or-- so that for me, trust is sort of a big one and because without trust people either act differently, sort of don't help each other as much as they could or miss out on great help that they could have got if there was an increased level of trust.

So, yes, as part of the team building, we have to work on how to remotely, how to sort of help increase that trust which works with some of us that have improved in the communication to the methods to put people in situations where they are increasing gradually so that they trust in each other and delivering and helping and yes, it makes the team a lot stronger. Because if in a couple of occasions where trust has been a problem, then it's really hard to manage, you usually end up with individuals or parts of the team just not communicating with another part of the team, which can be sort of problematic to get the right amounts of work done. So, yes, trust is pretty close to number one for the team to be important.

Interviewer: So, do you say that there are some situations that people lost trust and they don't communicate with the team, what happened?

Interviewee: So, for me, I'd say most of the time what happened is because of a difference in individuals values, so, if someone asked, if person A asks person B to do some work for them and then person B says yes, and then person A comes back tomorrow and says oh, have you got that thing for me, I need it for 5 minutes and person B says, oh no, I didn't do it. Then you have a problem, they don't trust each other going forward and the problem is person A now has a trust issue because person B didn't deliver what they said they would,

but person B didn't do it because they felt it wasn't that important and there was some higher priority work that may be a boss or someone else gave them. So, they all sort of think they're in the right, sort of a bit of a difficult one due to the difference.

Commented [Author286]: A breach of trust can negatively affect communication and work outcomes.

Interviewer: So, how would a manager...?

Interviewee: Yes, so, the manager, we have to keep working at the communication aspect and on sort of, you know, the team mantra of "my word is my bond" that we all know if we put our name to something, if we say something, we have to do it. Or if we can't or if it looks like it's not possible then we have to update as soon as possible and go hey sorry, and yes, that's fine as well. Because you know, sometimes things aren't possible, but it's just making sure that that's communicated as early as possible. So, yes, I don't find that it happens repeatedly, the training helps upfront and gets people working in the right way and when the odd issue does come up, then yes, we're very open about it and which is something I think is also important for the remote teams, is to have as much openness as possible. That really helps promote a collective kind of single team spirit and be honest and open about the miscommunication on the problems and yes, get everyone involved, to be open, to learn about it, and then move forward and that has worked very well so far.

Commented [Author287]: Create a team motto

Commented [Author288]: Provide cross-cultural training

Commented [Author289]: Cultivate a culture of open communication

Interviewer: And so, what do you think about trust in virtual teams compared to local teams?

Interviewee: My personal preference, because of being more agile, it would always be sort of a local team, I defined based on the number of areas where it's being able to work and collaborate in person will always be stronger than through any sort of technology or sort of other medium and that's just my personal belief. So, for me, I think the virtual team management, it is almost like you want to take advantage of a lot of things of having a virtual remote team, you know, cost, good resources, different locations, 24-hour global coverage, you want to take advantage of all those things but you have to implement a number of strategies and tools and systems to overcome, to fight against the problem of the difficulties that remote teams have. Been sat in different offices, thinking different things, thinking in different ways.

Commented [Author290]: It is harder to build trust in virtual teams

Commented [Author291]: More difficulties, more complexities, more workload

So, my preferences are always for the local team to work together on projects and work, but the benefits can-- those having remote team, can outdo, it's about whether those benefits of having a stronger perfect team in one location.

Interviewer: I see, and then how do you build trust in your virtual teams?

Interviewee: So, building trust in the virtual team is primarily, that goes back to trying to get as much face-to-face contact as possible. So, the management trips twice a year or it's

common for new starts if they want to travel, and then other regular formal and informal sort of catch up with individuals and people from across the teams, across the location. And putting them together regularly on projects, where they have to work together and they have to depend on each other and trust each other and as part of a pair and that helps trust, it helps develop the cross-team level of trust. Where everyone learns for themselves how they can rely on and trust different locations, different people.

Interviewer: An interviewee told me that when doing team-building, they would miss all the teams together, let people from New York team get mixed with London, so, every team have people from different locations, did you do the same at your company?

Interviewee: We do that sort of virtually, in terms of we put groups together across location, virtual groups that then will sort of do work on some projects or work on some training or some sort of casual more casual, less formal training and more to the casual team-building kind of work. Virtually we would do that, but yes, we wouldn't physically, we don't physically get the whole company or all of the teams kind of together in one location, it's done virtually with the firm projects or activities that help them grow together and to work together.

Interviewer: May I ask, how do you motivate your team members remotely it's difficult?

Interviewee: So, it is a lot easier once you've had some face-to-face contact, which is why I'd always sort of getting out to all the offices twice a year, to make sure that I've at least seen everyone in person and that gives you the opportunity to build a relationship that you can then sort of keep and strengthened remotely with video and the phone calls. And for me, motivation kind of comes back to the openness of the individuals, and so, I'll be working with the individual team members and also their local team leaders. Just the once and, you know, openly where they are at the moment, what the job role is like for them, what their areas of development are.

We tend to focus more on the plus points and the stronger points of teams, rather than focusing too much on you're not very good at this, you need to do this better, that's the angle we tend to work because there's so much work that we can tailor, we can kind of get people to work in the areas they're really strong at. Whilst also developing sort of their weaker points, but certainly not the number one focus, is kind of just looking at the weak points.

So, by trying to-- by making sure we understand the individual team members and the teams in each location, what their feelings, their thoughts, their intentions for the next year, what they want to work towards. It might be a set of qualifications or might be a job move

or something that we sort of work towards to tie that together with the goals of our team, which come from there the goals of the organization. So, we tied them together, so that by achieving the goals of the organization, that we need to do, we also end up working towards the goals and the achievements of what the team members want as well.

Interviewer: How do you build a relationship in virtual teams? That for co-located teams, you can hang out for beers and things like that, you can have a chit chat by the water cooler, but how about the virtual team? Do you have anything special?

Interviewee: For the virtual teams, we have a couple of-- a few different monthly social, so, it be kind of like virtual hangouts, for people that are interested in certain social aspects. One would just be a chat where people could have a drink and have a chat and talk about things. Others would be focused on sports, others would be focused on travel and there'd just be sort of - we would have team members that would champion each social group and then there'd be a monthly connection gathering virtual where people would sort of, as you were to do socially in your own time, sort of hang out, and then spend time and get to know each other-- and yes, that was a big change for us. I think when we started to introduce that, it sort of helped, we saw improvements in relationships and work across locations over the month or so afterward in the office. Those people have a lot stronger sense of a bond with individuals in different locations afterward.

Interviewer: When you do that, let's call it like a virtual party, does it have a name for it?

Interviewee: Good question, a name, yes, we just call them virtual hangouts.

Interviewer: A virtual hangout, okay, so, virtual hangout is organized during work hour or when people go home and they do virtual hangout?

Interviewee: Yes, they'll be organized within-- they would be organized and be allowed to run within office hours, because we're a global team, for someone somewhere, it would be out of hours or in hours and so, the times would normally rotate every few months, so, that it was at different times of the day for different locations, on like a rotor. So, yes, sometimes it was within work, and sometimes it is out to work, but I've always been a strong believer that the team should be allowed, individual should be allowed to spend a certain amount of time on their personal development and on some team-building development. And that they shouldn't just be working 9:00 to 5:00 Monday to Friday on the work, the chores, the you know the tasks – I find that…

Yes, then you go back to earlier where we were we were talking about they having issues with motivation and personal development and performance reviews is going to-- it gets a bit more difficult. But yes, that's definitely-- there'd be a lot of time in works for that.

Interviewer: So, for virtual hangouts, you have it at all times, like this time is London time and next time is New York time convenient. So, everybody has a chance to participate.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Oh, that's clever. It's interesting because when I interview for this project, every company has different new approaches, so, it's very, very interesting. So also, may I ask, are there any specific things, global virtual manager do at different times for example, at the start of or the end of a relationship or project, for example, anything you do different, in terms of review, feedback, performance, management, and things like that, that is different?

Interviewee: So, anything that I would do differently because of a different location or...?

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Interviewee: Yes, I guess it goes back to the cultural aspect of understanding the different cultural differences that-- for example, some cultures like very regular, very sort of informal catch-up performance reviews or just regular one to ones. Where some other cultures are not particularly fond or don't like too much management interaction, they just like once a month maximum kind of catch up which is a lot more sort of formal. I'd say that yes, the cultural differences make it slightly different in how we work on performance management and also in sort of the style were the different cultures would like to be either rewarded or challenged in different ways or motivated in different ways.

So, that has to feed into how we do performance reviews or how we manage, sort of delegate work. Some cultures like to be told what to do, other cultures like to be asked, the be invited to help with the work, So, sometimes it can sound very subtle difference, but it can be so very important to some people how works are phrase, you know similarly for remote leadership or local leadership, whether you're someone who – more - gives commands or whether you're someone that's a more sort of lead from within the team and sort of like certain leadership that helps the individuals in the team to maximize their potential, whilst helping also align them to the company's goals, it's a different say, you have to understand the cultural differences between the locations and they do get treated. Not they get treat treated differently in a sort of a positive way, in a customized way, I guess there are the works best for them.

Interviewer: May I ask, how many years of experience you have in managing global virtual teams?

Interviewee: Sorry, any…?

Interviewer: How many years of my experience that you've managed...?

Interviewee: For global, so, I guess that's going to be 12 years I'd say.

Interviewer: 12 years, and how does your experience help you to manage, i mean, how does your experience help you to deal with challenges in managing global virtual teams? Like if you don't have the first-hand experience, would it be different?

Interviewee: Yes, I understand. So, the way I managed it remotely at the start is definitely sort of how I mostly manage it today. So, the more experience you have of things that work well personally and things that don't work well, that then feeds into how you continue to manage people or how you manage them in a different role or a different job, different company. So, it's definitely a build and build and improves I think for everyone and certainly for myself, so, you sort of developing your style, develop and improves, I think, over time and you get to know a few good tools or methods to help the team building or the team management.

Interviewer: I guess somebody without no experience before, they may feel confused between countries.

Interviewee: Yes, I'd say it would be definitely beneficial to do some form of training or development on the differences [between co-located and virtual management] if you're going to do it for the first time. Because there's lots of really good information help on how to set up and do certain things on the teams. But ultimately, I think that can only get you to 60, 70% of their being a strong, effective, remote leader, I think the other 30%, sort of 40 needs to come from self-experience. But that's not to say you'd be a bad remote leader, I just think you'd be an okay one, even if you do some sort of training, but you need to actually do it, it's a very vocational sort of job where you learn a from the experience rather than the classroom.

Interviewer: I see, so what do you think managers need to be effective in this area, managing a global virtual team, like skills, knowledge, attitudes? What do you need to do?

Interviewee: For me, I think one of the big ones is having empathy, so, you as a manager having empathy to understand the differences, are they on a cultural level, a location level, a personal level. Sort of understand the differences in the people's motivations, intentions, and to care about them. And I think for that, we have that kind of attitude helps to build relationships and it helps get a good bond between manager and remote resources. And so, I think that's a strong one. I would also say you need to have good organizational skills to

Commented [Author303]: Experience helps to develop leadership styles and skills

Commented [Author304]: Roadmap suggestions for building expertise in virtual team

Commented [Author305]: Show empathy

juggle the logistics of all of the communication and the travel and the training and work that needs to go on just to keep the teams operating normally. So, yes, I'd say that empathy and organizational skills, those are the number one and two for me.

Interviewer: And number three, I guess communication?

Interviewee: Yes, I guess for me communication is kind of the-- it's almost like it's so important that I don't even state it so, for me communication is as important for a local manager as it is for a remote manager. But the-- we're addressing the communication with the building of the trust and showing empathy and organizing. But, yes, communication is probably the first one that pops up, I'd say for a lot of people and it's the first thing people think of in terms of technology to help communication. So, yes, I'll tell it for number three.

Interviewer: So, we are nearly there, I only have a few last questions.

Interviewee: That's all right, that's cool.

Interviewer: Thank you. So, do you have any recommendations directed towards helping virtual managers to manage virtual teams more efficiently and enhance the team performance?

Interviewee: And I guess it depends-- would this be to a new remote manager or just generally to improve an existing kind of remote manager?

Interviewer: So, this is the recommendation towards remote managers to manage the team more effectively.

Interviewee: I would say to ensure that you have either a local team leader or a local go-to person in every location because they are your ears and your eyes kind of in that location and then they help project what you want to do and what your goal for the team ad what your intentions are. So, I'd say having a clearly defined local person to be that lead or go-to person. And also having a team, like a team charter, so, it's like a team list of promises or expectation that we as a team, we as individuals in this team expect to be able to do this, expect to be able to say this. We'll always treat each other like this, we'll-- rule. Rules are the wrong word, but kind of like the operational...

Interviewer: Principle?

Interviewee: Yes, principles, is the principles that-- what the role, what the jobs, what the teams need to do, and how we should be working together. And it's very much focused on individuals and then kind of on people as people and rather than following laws, it's more about how we treat each other well to get the best of each other. So, I'd say those two, so, having a local person and having a team sort of having a very published sort of principles.

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Commented [Author306]: Organisational skills

Commented [Author307]: Communication

Commented [Author308]: Ensure that there is good local leadership in each area

Commented [Author309]: Create a team motto

Commented [Author310]: Create a team motto

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Interviewer: I think those principles are like the backbone for building trust.

Interviewee: Yes, because it's a very human thing to do, it's difficult sometimes, for some people have different thoughts, different intentions and it might not be clear to everyone what's expected of them. And that goes for any job, local or remote, that if you make it very clear to people what's expected, that resolves, that stops a lot of issues of miscommunication happening really early and really well.

> **Commented [Author311]:** Create a team motto

Interviewer: Let me check, so, also, you talked a lot about making it open between people, but for me, I think it's a very difficult thing for me to let people open, especially if there are some conflicts and things like that. So, how can you create and maintain a culture openness like that?

Interviewee: So, it's some that ties into the principles that we were just talking about, in terms of you make people very aware of certain principles. So, for example, the people won't be necessarily punished or negatively marked if, for example, they have a-- they cause-- they have a failure at work or they cause an issue at work. It's sort of making sure that people understand that it's an open culture, it's not a blame culture, its one where if you ask for help, that's never a negative thing, that that's always a positive thing, that you recognize it as a problem and you want to learn, you want help.

> **Commented [Author312]:** Create an open, blame-free learning culture

So, it's sort of having three or four of those kinds of items. And also, not just saying them and publishing them, but it's about living them through every interaction, every incident, every problem and then people very quickly sort of seeing how people are treating each other, there's no they did this, they messed up kind of culture, it's very much a collaborative agile learning culture and we don't mind failing, as long as we can prove that we learn from it and we get better and we sort of grow, then that's good. So, it's kind of having the principles and then showing them, demonstrating them and publicly to each other and to everyone, that helps.

> **Commented [Author313]:** Create a team motto

> **Commented [Author314]:** Create an open, blame-free learning culture

> **Commented [Author315]:** Create an open, blame-free learning culture

Interviewer: You remind me about one thing I read about Google culture, there's something, when an incident happened they will do, I don't know the term, but basically like police work on **a dead body** like somebody, that they will have why this happened and also, there's a part, they say how lucky we were, what did we do, how lucky we were. Because we didn't know that we should prepare for this, but somehow they-- how do you say it...

Interviewee: Yes, I know what you mean.

Interviewer: Like we didn't prepare for that, but thanks to luck that we got over this, something like that.

Interviewee: es.

Interviewer: So, maybe it also helps for this kind of situation.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: The little boy cries. So, may I ask you, for the job title?

Interviewee: Yes, so, the job title was Head of UNIX.

Interviewer: UNIX.

Interviewee: Yes, Unix, U-N-I-X

Interviewer: U-N-I-X.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, UNIX.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: And the type of business was?

Interviewee: The type of business was a financial market infrastructure.

Interviewer: Finance market, yes, and the size of people you managed, like...?

Interviewee: So, my team total was sort of 50.

Interviewer: 50 people.

Interviewee: Do you want the breakdown by location?

Interviewer: Yes, so, London 14, Sri Lanka 13?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: And a couple, US and Europe.

Interviewee: Yes, two in Europe and then four in America.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, actually, that's it, thank you, I learned a lot from this.

Interviewee: Yes, good luck with it and I look forward to it, hopefully, you'll let some of us sort of seeing when it's all done and you're published and qualified, that'll be good to have a look.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, sure.

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Answers to follow-up questions:

Question: Is it possible to estimate how much does your company save up by running virtual teams compared to hiring 100% local people? (If not, please explain why.)

Answer: On average the cost to the company to hire an IT resource in the Sri Lanka market was £10k per year compared to £60k in London. With a team of circa 200 in Sri Lanka this produced an annual cost saving of £10m.

> **Commented [Author316]:** Cost saving

Question: Would you consider yourself as a transactional leader or transformational leader? Please explain. From your point of views, transformational or transactional leadership is more effective in virtual teams? Please explain why and how, if possible.

Answer: I would consider myself as a hybrid between transactional and transformational leader. For circa 30% of the team's work no additional value could be gained outside of delegation and work distribution. For the other 70% team members could be encouraged through servant leadership to add real value to the business and deliver beyond the boundaries of their job description. I also believe that a combination of transactional and transformative leadership is more effective in virtual teams. The transactional side is easier since work can be delivered and managed via multiple electronic formats, however the transformational side is more difficult due to there being no in-person communication.

> **Commented [Author317]:** Hybrid leadership

Question: With the Covid-19, many global virtual team members are currently working from home instead from their offices as before. Do you think home-based global virtual teams will be common in the long run, post Covid-19?

Answer: In the current Covid climate I believe the pendulum has already strongly swung to work from home for all knowledge workers. Even when it is safe to do so I do not believe the workforce will reduce to the previous levels of work from home. Yes, I believe there will be a lot more roles that will be fully or mostly work from home in the near future.

> **Commented [Author318]:** The growing trend of global virtual teams that work from home

Question: From your point of view, what are the support policies and management practices companies need to provide global virtual team members who work from home to enhance their performance? (i.e. creating home office, work-related tools, gym workout, health and safety, flexibility, childcare, team-building activities, etc…)

Answer: All of the mentioned support and management policies are important. Personally, I feel the most important ones are making available the correct toolkit (digital and physical) to work effectively (and increase performance) and also the health and safety aspect as staff must now regulate their own working environment.
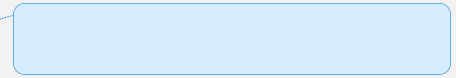
Interview number 5

Type of interview: Video call interview

Date: 12 June 2020

Location: London

Duration: 00:53:36

Job title of the interviewee: Application Engineering Lead

Gender: Male

Age range: 30-40

Team size: 12 people (based in London, Sri Lanka, Romania, Italy and Russia)

Size of company: 4,000-5000 people

Interviewer: So, this research about managing global virtual teams in the London fintech industry and the first question is what does global virtual team mean to you?

Interviewee: Okay so I was gonna start and let you know that I mean I'm quite new to managing.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Okay so you can take my answers as just my experiences over the past few months because recently it's really kind of exploded. I'm managing a lot more people and from the lockdown as well obviously everything is virtual now. So, most of my team is in London but obviously it's a virtual team now. We also got people in Sri Lanka and I've got a new guy starting in Bucharest, Romania on Monday. And we're working also with people in Italy and people in Russia generally on a project and also, it's not only me that manages the team, it's kind of split between me and a project manager at the moment. So, but that's the kind of background of what I'm doing at the moment. So, what does the virtual team mean to me, I was gonna say it's the team that's formed across multiple international locations that uses collaboration and communication tools in order to work together effectively without being able to use the traditional face-to-face kind of methods.

Interviewer: Umm.

Interviewee: Lots of it is about leveraging those kinds of collaboration and communication tools to glue the team together, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah. And from your point of view, what business drivers for virtual management in London think the industry?

Interviewee: Well, definitely these three: follow-the-sun support that kind of things are enabling the 24-hour coverage of services, cost savings clearly, and finding talent that's not otherwise available.

Interviewer: Finding talent, yeah.

Interviewee: That's, so within our, I mean, the other part of your question is what the main drivers in our company. It's definitely about follow-the-sun support. So there are a lot of people in Sri Lanka that can cover you know from no assistance they start off very early morning so it's the same as financial companies like this is about having people in the office online from you know 1 a.m. in the morning UK time and then covering that shift through to when the UK team comes on-site. So that's one of the big things I think other than that clearly it's all about cost saving. If you look at the locations that companies [Garbled] for however that's not openly acknowledged by the company so the official line is it's all about finding the best talent in the best locations and they will not acknowledge that it's that cost saving but it's clearly a cost-saving.

Interviewer: Ahh.

Interviewee: Main things I think the drivers, so yeah.

Interviewer: Why not my interviewee he says that people often say that it's about cost, cost-saving?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: But actually it's just a perception of cost because actually like for example instead of for the same job instead of hiring the ten people in London you have to hire like 100 people in India to do the same job or also the company had to spend loads on the local office before that.., seeing any cost-saving so that you have to stay low. So do you think it's really cost-saving thing or just a perception of cost-saving?

Interviewee: I think is a perception of cost-saving maybe there is some cost-saving but there is definitely loss of quality I think as a result, because, I mean, I think you know the way the IT is going these days in terms of DevOps and things like that you won't have like a small highly skilled close-knit team that do things really well and they don't need to be supported and maintained but I think through going offshore with like a lot of skilled

workforce a lots more people. I think what we have though is just a lot of people who are repeatedly coming across the same problem fixing the same problem and you know they, then you need more people to just continually kind of keep on maintaining things whereas for me the approach should really be, and it doesn't matter on the location, just to get highly skilled workers to fix something, fix it once it never causes a problem again or more preferably do it really well in the first place so that it never breaks. So, we're trying to move to more like the DevOps model where we don't have a separation between development, We've got a team that does everything and they're kind of incentivized to do things well so that they don't have the burden of supporting them. Suppose that's, that's part of what we're doing at the moment but definitely like in terms of signing off new resources we had a bunch of new resources signed off yesterday and the split was probably something like 80% Sri Lanka, 20% London. So, there's still a perception that you need a couple of people in London to guide a large number of people in Sri Lanka and they'll spend a lot of their time doing manual work, you know, weekends, manually deploying things, checking things, fixing things so yeah, I think is it perceived cost-saving but we've got some really good people in Sri Lanka don't get me wrong. I think the job market there is not that fluid either at the moment.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: You know I think it's not a very large pool of workers that are available in IT and I think people move around quite quickly in some of these offshore locations as well. They do struggle with hiring people and I think at the moment really they're mainly only able to hire fresh graduates so we often get in these very junior people coming in, you know, it's difficult to get experience. There got a bit off-topic I guess.., but yeah that's.., that's another one of the troubles we have, whereas in Romania, for example, there are a lot of people with skillsets I think it's available.

Interviewer: So, the quality of talent is different between locations you think?

Interviewee: Definitely because I think, I mean, the main ones I was seeing in Sri Lanka, London and Romania. I think in Sri Lanka, you know, it's not a massive country and it's..., it's all centered around one big city Colombo pool of the graduates they will come out at the same university, Technology University. So I don't…, it's just a domestic job market there so I don't think we see they like that variety of people with a variety of experiences whereas in London clearly you've got people from traveling outside coming in. There are so many different companies, so you've got this big kind of melting pot of people with different experiences and different backgrounds. Romania seems to be like they have people with like quite a good wide technical skillset I think is quite an established market.

Romania, I haven't worked a lot with people in Romania but I think generally like very good, generally quite - good attention to detail and skillsets so that's going to be an interesting one.

Interviewer: Umm-hmm.

Interviewee: I've got a guy starting on Monday, the first one should be.., I found out is probably what my meeting at nine o'clock about found out yesterday. So, they've hired someone else is hired. Then they've decided to assign them to me I've never spoken to them. I don't know who they are – I've seen their CV, but they start working for me.

Interviewer: Wow, that's interesting. If you work for you and you have not recruited, how can you assure that they will get on well with you and your team?

Interviewee: Well exactly, yeah, we're just hoping really. My colleagues are recruiting them to the team and I think I trust those guys to meet my requirement because I trust those - their judgement - but yeah. So, then I've got a meeting at 9:00 o'clock with a few people to try to figure out what - how do we integrate this person into the project because I need to know by Monday morning. It's interesting.

Interviewer: But if you have a choice would you rather recruit your team member yourself?

Interviewee: Of course. Definitely yeah, yeah and sadly I didn't get a chance to speak to the guy but yeah usually doing that hiring more people always…, always taking the interviewing myself. [Cross-talk] we don't…, we don't have a particularly thorough recruitment process at the moment. Normally I would just speak to someone on the phone for half an hour and get an idea if they sound generally like what we need then maybe like an hour - Well, now it would be video conference but previously face to face meeting for now basically speak for an hour maybe with one other person there. The previous two guys that I hired I spoken to them half an hour on the phone and then for an hour in an interview to face interview and it was only mean that met them.

Interviewer: Do you have to test their skill or something like that. Exam, any exercise?

Interviewee: We don't do any of that no it's all just done through just you know analyzing CV. Talking about previous experiences, previous achievements and no these guys didn't have any technical assessment or anything like that. So yeah.

Interviewer: Alright, so is that the colleague that you recruited him is the project manager you mentioned before?

Commented [Author328]: Evaluate skills of employees in offshore locations

Commented [Author329]: *Less ownership over recruitment process*

Commented [Author330]: *Less ownership over recruitment process*

Commented [Author331]: *Less ownership over recruitment process*

Commented [Author332]: Less ownership over recruitment process

Interviewee: No I know saying that actually I'm.., I'm working mainly on one large project at the moment so I'm the team lead or meant to be the technical lead to the project so I'm not.., I think I'm moving into a job where I'm a line manager but previously I meant to be like the technical lead on a project and then we have a project manager who kind of works alongside me they run the project so they kind of monitoring all tickets workload that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Umm-hmm.

Interviewee: It's a bit of a different set up to normal and the season a bit of a period of change really where we've got a lot of large projects going on we're recruiting lots of people and having a big re-org that kind of thing so it's a little bit you know chaotic at the moment we're just getting by as best as we can, but I think we had quite an experience with building a virtual team over the past – well, certainly since the lockdown but even before that I've been doing that for on and off for a while and got some good stuff probably to tell you about how.., how what my experiences for that.

Interviewer: May as you about what are the key challenges that you face when you manage a global virtual team?

Interviewee: Right. The was first one of there is the effort that it takes just to have a chat to someone about something so if you're in the office generally you know you just turn around. You're constantly talking and there's a kind of general discussion going on and awareness of what's going on. It's just an effort that it takes to make sure that everybody's in touch with what everybody else is doing and if you want to talk to someone about something I mean I've been trying to encourage people to get on Skype, you know, so that they can just call each other and just have a chat. People seem kind of reluctant to do that when they're in a virtual team I find people prefer to use the chatting apps rather than speaking and I would definitely prefer to speak.

So, just having a chat with someone and it seems the only way to really do that is to kind of find a time in the diary send them an invite and then you know, what I find it down as well is that if you put half an hour in the diary you will always speak half an hour. I mean if you're in the office you would just speak for as long as it takes to discuss your topic and then that would be it, so that it's just the effort that it takes for you to keep in touch and to just communicate with each other about things it's almost like it takes quite a lot of planning. So, we try and keep the momentum going with that. So, we have a call every single day, at the same time, with the entire team. It's supposed to be daily scrum across the team so we're supposed to just come in and everybody just gives a quick rundown of

Commented [Author333]: Vitual team members prefer to use the chatting apps rather than speaking

Commented [Author334]: Default meeting time

what they've done in the previous day, what they are on today, what are the blockers, can we help you with anything, that's it but invariably that call doesn't really set up its purpose and we go straight off-topic straight away and start talking about in detail all those different things so that kind of that tells me that people aren't really communicating enough outside of that meeting you know one-to-one discussing their work and coming along and just having a quick update, as you would in the office. We've been a virtual team I'm finding that actually because it's an effort to communicate, people come to just wait until that day you meeting to try and talk to everybody and then always overruns and we always go off-topic so that's a bit of a challenge at the moment. Yeah, something for a technical team you need to have the right tools, I think. You can't really be standing in a room with people doing things on the whiteboard and you know just thinking about and that kind of thing. We don't really have the tools to do that at the moment although we're told, eventually we're going to get one whiteboarding ability [for their virtual meeting software] and that kind of thing but it's never going to be the same but we don't have that at the moment and that's something that is holding us back.

Interviewer: I talked to an interview the other day and he said that he uses a white board on video calls. So, a physical whiteboard at his back so people can see what he is thinking.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, maybe I should do that I don't use video call either, actually – I mean I've got an iPad, you know. I've got a webcam, but I mean nobody is using video actually at workplace this probably [Name] uses video sometimes but yeah generally if we go on a call nobody is using video it's just audio. I'm not sure why that is, to be honest, that we haven't really adopted that.

Interviewer: You prefer with video or without video?

Interviewee: I think if everybody's doing video, I don't mind doing video but if I'm like the only one or two then not. Actually also been doing my Chinese class virtually like a university course and we use like a video kind of feature on that so that that's being quite good and because I mean I haven't got a webcam so I wasn't using it but everybody else was just to say you know it's I prefer using it and everybody else was.

Well, another couple of challenges quickly, I was gonna say I find it challenging because personally I don't want to spend my entire time using a chatting app or interacting virtually I definitely prefer face-to-face and I think it's really that fulfilling for me to not have the human contact to the face-to-face kind of thing. So, before the lockdown, we had quite a good mix because we had quite a team of people in London that were interacting face to face but we still had colleagues in other locations that we interact with on the phone, but I

can see, that having a completely virtual team where you don't have any other people in the same location it's gonna be a bit challenging and the guy [Name] when he starts on Monday he's gonna be the only person in our team in Bucharest.

So, I supposed while we're in lockdown it doesn't make a difference but when he starts going to the office and he's the only one in the office in the team it's gonna be strange for him. But obviously it's a challenge to build rapport with people and really just to know what people are doing I think you know you need to be constantly in touch to understand what's going on whereas if it's just happening around you kind of overhear things and see people doing things you just know what's happening it's kind of difficult to.., to do that. We come onto that there did their ways and means of trying to retreat that.

Interviewer: Okay, someone told me that they think that in the call during the call video should be a must so you can see people and also like when you see people you could be more careful about what you say like when you're angry you cannot just throw bad words to them because you see them you know and I also agree oh you know what they really think about an issue. Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah that's it you can sense things. A lot the people just go on mute and you just don't know what's happened.

Interviewer: But in reality, most people don't use video.

Interviewee: No, no I haven't, definitely no. People avoid it actually, I think.

Interviewer: They avoid video?

Interviewee: Definitely.

Interviewer: Why do you think they avoid video though?

Interviewee: I have no idea. Maybe they're chilling out on their sofa, or something!

Interviewer: [Laughter] No need for make-up.

Interviewee: Yes, exactly, you don't need to do your hair and stuff I mean I think I have managed to get hairdresser.

Interviewer: How did you manage to get a hairdresser?

Interviewee: My Mum's a hairdresser - She gave me a haircut like the weekend before last we sat in the back garden, she gave me a haircut. It was kind of like - [Name] recorded me actually. It's like the hairs coming all the way to my knees.

Interviewer: I did haircut for [Name] twice for fun.

Interviewee: Did you?

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm trying to take away the job from his hairdresser, but he refused. He just uses me as a temporary hairdresser. So, may I ask you about cultural differences? Do you have you experienced any cultural differences in your virtual team?

Interviewee: There is – I can talk about some experiences over the years. I don't think I'm really facing these at the moment, but…. I think culturally with a colleague in Sri Lanka - they have always got the tendency to say yes to everything you know. If they feel like they can't say no, or they'll receive an email and instantly will send a reply saying I'm looking into it and then you won't hear anything that kind of thing so I think they were - when it was all kind of quite fresh and I started working with them there was a kind of tendency that they would always want to appear like they'd be very helpful and always saying yes even if they had no idea if they can achieve things. But for me at the moment I don't see that so much I think maybe it's changed over the years a bit of - we've kind of got used to a way of working. I mean definitely I would encourage people a bit to say like you know "hang on a minute, you sure?" kind of thing, "you , it's okay to say no", or" it's okay to say you need to think about it", that kind of thing where you can see - maybe if you can understand yourself it's not easy then you kind of try and.., and I think people adapted in that sense.

Interviewer: So, people that you're working with, they adapt the business?

Interviewee: I think so I think that I think that we have all adopted together a bit on that although I think they're still very.., still very courteous and, you know, with people in London will be very quick to challenge people wins you know stand their ground that kind of thing whereas I think just culturally that's not something that the people will be willing to do that. What else? I mean worked a lot with Italian colleagues, and there was at some point you know, when as well when we all initially started to mix together now there's some cultural difference where it would appear you know every half an hour, they're going to the kitchen to have a coffee and have a chat this kind of stuff and [Name] will know this. It's just culturally the way that they are right, you know, people…, English people go to the kitchen make a cup of tea and come back to their desk and carry on working and or they get their lunch and sit on their desk and whatever whereas in Italian will sometimes we even see them then we go to the kitchen 10 minutes before they finish work. So they go to the kitchen have a coffee for 10 minutes you come back to the desk sign in do a couple

of things and then go home that kind of thing so it's like that was a big difference and I think in the end some people like managers talked to them and said like you know some of the people in the.., in the London teams aren't happy that you're able to take maybe two hours' worth of breaks per day. It's just not what we do in the London office I mean we don't see that much anymore but it was definitely..., definitely er something culturally as well.

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: But I don't think it necessarily means anybody does more or less work because you do need time to have a break and often their colleagues chatting about work in the kitchen but I think the way people perceive that is that they're not working because they know their desks otherwise.

Interviewer: Hmm, I see.

Interviewee: But sometimes obviously attention to detail is a bit lacking as a generalization across teams in different locations. Attention to detail can be lacking a bit but I just think maybe that's not necessary to do - well could be a cultural thing, could be just to do with a level of skill set that kind of thing. Yeah, they.., there are kind of things and how do we get along with these things? It takes a while to get used to it. As I said really encouraging people to challenge things in Sri Lanka encouraging them to question things, not to kind of try to give an answer they think people want to hear so I think so.

Interviewer: In terms of language, do you experience any language barriers like you say things that people don't understand? Something like that.

Interviewee: Not really or at least people don't tell me that they do not understand what I'm saying. About other people, understanding other people, I was gonna say I think my ears tuned in pretty well to any English spoken by people but I think if it's like me talking to Sri Lankan people they've obviously got the heaviest accent I think. So for me to hear their accent, it's not unusual for me because obviously I'm used to living in London and just mixing generally with lots of different accents and maybe even some English people pretty hard to understand I think so. You…, just over the years your ear just kind of tunes into it. I think other colleagues do struggle with it, you know, maybe Italian colleagues who aren't used to talking to people with a variety of different accents, and also, it's not, you know, where it's not their native language and then they're trying to deal with a very thick accent nothing that could be difficult for some people.

The main problem that we face is that the telephone lines between London and Sri Lanka are really not very good. it would appear there's always some kind of interference or I think background noise that kind of thing is a real problem you know there might some colleagues you know we can oh the one that happens sometimes is like the weather is obviously very changeable there in different seasons a lot of heavy rain they will just be this huge kind of like [makes whooshing sound] yeah that's it all of a sudden and then some colleagues here on the phone if then on mute you can just hear all of these sounds like they're in the rain forest or something with these like tropical birds and things I think because people working from home at the moment that they obviously you know they got the window open like I have they're living in a very different country. So, sometimes there's a lot, sometimes the roads are noisy you just it is it's very difficult I think with that on top. I mean one of my pet hates is well you can sit on a phone call and spend like five minutes explaining something in a lot of details to people and they won't stop you and say I can't hear you or I don't understand you.., you get to the end can you ask them a question then they'll say, I'm sorry can you repeat that that. Then you say Oh my God. I've been sat here talking to like 5 minutes and at the last line, he was not listening or what.

Commented [Author347]: Background noise

Interviewer: Hmm, I see.

Interviewee: Yeah. Not paying attention. How we doing for time? Half way?

Interviewer: Oh yeah. You have a meeting at nine. Isn't it?

Interviewee: Yeah that's right. Yeah.

Interviewer: So how about we do another 15 minutes and I catch up with you another day is all fair to you?

Interviewee: Although we've got 25 minutes – it's fine yeah I was just wondering a bit slow, okay.

Interviewer: Okay so may I ask you about trust? What does trust mean to you in your work environment?

Interviewee: Trust is allowing people to work flexibly without being monitored all of the time I think we'll manage to really that closely we don't really have a culture of managing people that closely in [Company Name] we like to build up the trust with people where they can be you know provided with a high-level piece of work and they can take that away and they can manage their own time and you know to be responsible for completing that piece of work. So that's how I've always worked though I mean I have very little interaction with my own manager it's really got no idea what I'm doing at all to be honest

Commented [Author348]: Role performance trust

the only time I really catch up his him this kind of infrequently to feedback and normally you know when I need him to help me to make a decision or something more that kind of thing or if I just need him to authorise something that I'm doing and then going down the chain obviously when you've got lots of people it's difficult to be that close contact so.., yeah I'm just saying you know leaving them with the task or an objective and just really let them take ownership of it.

So, it takes a bit to build up that kind of trust the various different ways that we try to…, I mean obviously people you've got a relationship with for a long time you know that you can't just leave them to get on with it but with newer people it's yeah you kind of try and – I don't know when it's a good time to talk about it in this - but with some of the things we do on the projects obviously. We use ticketing system, so we use Jira Kanban to kind of you know between myself and the project manager in the sprint will raise up like a high-level ticket which basically contains you know the objective that needs to be achieved, you know, do this with him pass that over to the person they can break it down into the individual tasks and that's what needs to be done and really they just go off and manage that ticket and I think over a period of time where people are kind of, you can see people taking the ownership, understanding what they need to do and then actually completing that work. That is how we're building up trust in a virtual team.

I think part of it's about building up trust and part of it it's about putting the accountability on to that person because they know that that's their objective every day, they'll be in phone call, that they need to attend and provide update. They've got a due date, so it needs to be finished in the sprint. So, there are the kind of main two things that we're doing. As I said before like using the collaboration tools to kind of the glue things together really across the team that's not.., not in the same room where you're not kind of aware of what people are doing. So we have the visibility of what they're doing on a daily basis because of the tickets that are assigned and the updates they provide. As a project manager is said to me, it's very telling if someone doesn't attend the daily call – if they don't attend the daily call for a couple of days in a row then clearly something's wrong. They're probably avoiding it because they, you know, they're not doing their work, and at that point, you know, you need to go talk to them and see..., see what's going on. We have got a couple of people may be one in particular like that - we struggle to understand what they're doing, so we use those kinds of techniques and services. Now that..., that allows us to build up the trust really and let people take..., take ownership of their own work.

Interviewer: Hmm, Nice. And how do you motivate your team members remotely?

> **Commented [Author349]:** *Facilitate accountability to build trust*

> **Commented [Author350]:** *Facilitate accountability to build trust*

Interviewee: I mean part of it is about making them accountable for the tickets in the way that I just described. So, I mean if they have to give an update on a daily basis. They've got a deadline, they're going to be motivated to do the work, and that's the kind of one way and the other way I think, a program manger I'm welcome this was quite good at involving them in the bigger picture of the project. Now if you've got a team with people and all these and small individual things she's quite good at providing feedback to them from the stakeholders. We have like a.., a weekly delivery meeting with all the senior stakeholders and there's like a PowerPoint pack that comes out for all of the dates, all of the timelines, and everything in it. And every week they know the feedback from that meeting goes out to the team, so they can sort of see where they fit into the bigger picture - the things that they've achieved you know what's the feedback from the stakeholders on that what's the benefit is given to the business that kind of thing then they get the visibility of the next thing you're going to be assigned. This is where it fits into the plan, this is the deadline date, and that kind of I think helps to motivate people to kind of come together as a team and see that they're delivering one thing rather than lots of individual different things.

Interviewer: Yeah. Do you and your firm, is there any like virtual events like a virtual bar or something?

Interviewee: Not very good at that stuff, no. Pretty jealous actually essentially [Name] hosted a quiz for her team yesterday and they're doing stuff like every week in our place. And I haven't done anything actually and that's true of how it used to be in the office you know how it used to be you know there are some people who would socialize together but other people they just want to come and do their job and go home so..,

Interviewer: Hmm, chill.

Interviewee: Still yeah not very good at doing virtual socializing. Maybe it's my responsibility as the manager to set something up actually.

Interviewer: I think you can do that.

Interviewee: On a Friday afternoon have a drink and a chat that kind of thing that probably could help a lot to build up relationships.

Interviewer: Do you =, in your firm do you move people, like the London team to work in Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka come to work in London for a week one month or something like that? For understand?

Interviewee: Very rarely and when they do it's not normally for a short period of time, it's for a long period of time. So, actually if we didn't go into lockdown, we would have three

Commented [Author351]: Facilitate accountability to build trust

people, actually two people at the time working in the team. They kind of seconded onto the project. If the lockdown didn't happen they were going to come to London for three months. So, normally I mean previously where we've worked with support people in Sri Lanka we had you know they permanently based in Sri Lana they - I think because so there's a visa regulation they can come for three months, and they have to return home for a month, and then they can come for three months again, then they can't come again for some period of time. So it's generally in quite larger trunks and time rather than a short visit than for you know, like European colleagues that kind of thing, they'll come over for just a few days. But I've never personally travelled - the only person I've ever heard of going to Sri Lanka actually is a couple of people went. [Name] went mainly because he's got a lot of people working. I would like to but for the moment it doesn't really apply because virtually the whole team is in London. Travel is really beneficial, I think.

Commented [Author352]: Undertake physical visits

Interviewer: Hmm.

Interviewee: Really really.., really beneficial because you build that relationship, I think. Well, a close relationship. We had a guy [Name] come over for six months last year and it's now you know we've fully integrated [Garbled] whereas with other colleagues in Sri Lanka team it's almost very is very distant kind of you don't really know who they are. You know get to know them really suppose that's one thing is new only really get to know somebody when you kind of work face to face and as you say we'd also socially doing things having lunch together that kind of thing.

Commented [Author353]: Justify benefits of visiting local offices

Interviewer: Also it can help to understand the local cultural things.

Interviewee: Absolutely yeah. I mean I love to go to Sri Lanka to work.

Interviewer: Maybe I want to come.

Interviewee: Maybe one day I will go.

Interviewer: Maybe go there and tell me how it is. So…, what are the difference between managing a global virtual team and a traditional team?

Interviewee: Okay because there's much bigger onus on leveraging those kind of tools, collaboration tools and communication tools obviously to bring the team together, so that is a kind of skill in its own right. I think I'm definitely not mastered it yet but I think yeah you know, with face to face traditional teams these things just happen naturally by being present together in the office - you know you just know what other people are doing. The presence of a manager in the same room as you it is naturally a kind of something that motivates people to concentrate on their work. So the main differences are you having to

Commented [Author354]: Technology skills

use these tools and methods to kind of fill the gap that's left by not being in the same room just naturally building up the rapport and things like that but [Garbled] you need to find other ways of making people accountable again and start listen. You know, it's not always apparent when things aren't being done because I can't be sure if my team member right now is at work or not work, well let alone. If they're at work what they're doing I can tell you a little bit from if they're online on the chat app. So I mean the main differences are you're completely relying on tools and technologies for building the team and you're relying on the company giving you the tools and technologies to do that um yeah I think that's.., that's the main thing I was going to say

Interviewer: Do you need backup plan so just in case like the technology and tools you are using it falling down like first-stage of the lock down there are many tools for hours.

Interviewee: We do mainly because we've got lots of different tools. Because what happens in [Company Name] they've got one tool and then want to replace it with another one so we start using the new one but they never quite managed to get rid of the old one. So when we started the lock-down we were using the conference line system where you just dial in and enter your code [Garbled] conference line but that quickly got overloaded, and you know you would dial in and it would just lock you out just say no sorry or disconnect you.., you wouldn't be able to log into the call because it was just too busy so then everybody decided on to using Skype for their calls and Skype is actually been quite good. I have been times where Skype is not managed to cope with the load and what else did we do we found that if we organized the conference call at like quarter past the hour instead of on the hour or on the half an hour you know quarter past 10:00 or something.

It was less likely to have many people opening a call at that time, so you'd be able to open your call at quarter past or twenty past rather than exactly 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock. So there ways to kind of find around this stuff yeah generally everybody moved over to Skype and now sometimes will have some problems with Skype but we know that nobody's using conferences I can use the conference system. I've got two conference systems as well so and if all else fails yeah just cancel it do it some other time. And again, with Microsoft Teams we use, we've had some outages on Microsoft Teams I think they've got over the outage on teams but we've always got Skype that we can use for chatting all Skype is not as good as teams for chatting we can use Skype or Teams if Skype isn't working so we've got like a few similar things we can switch around between I haven't had the situation where nothing at all is possible.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Very flexible.

Interviewee: If not we can always use something else.

Interviewer: I see. So, may ask how many years of global virtual management experience that you have?

Interviewee: Not many to be honest well my experiences come in the last six months I would say. Before that I've worked on on smaller projects but not really the manager just kind of a line manager of a team a bit more just like the technical lead on a project may be giving people direction on what needs to be done in a virtual way. Working team with people in Sri Lanka, Italy, Romania, Russia, and London but we also have two offices in London and all of the project managers they sit in a different office to us so even in London we have a bit of a virtual team. So, usually, it's just me and my office it's other people in other offices working virtually, but in the last six months obviously with the lockdown and as things have grown in my role as well I am actually managing maybe about seven or eight people directly now and giving direction to a wider team of up to about 15 people so it's really the last six months.

Interviewer: Congratulations. How's the feeling of a new virtual team?

Interviewee: We've got huge virtual team, too big actually, because I have a daily call now with about 15 people that's too many people to have on a scrum call we need to break it up. This is why we're running over at the time every single day. There are so many people and so much to discuss yeah we are looking to break it down but yeah this is new to me really so hope this stuff is that they'll be interesting to see what you think of what I said actually.

> **Commented [Author357]:** Communication overload

Interviewer: So, I would ask, what do you think managers need to be effective in this area like in terms of skills, knowledge, attitude?

Interviewee: Definitely need to be patient because things aren't going to be as easy as they are. If you've got a face-to-face thing you can just go into a room together and discuss something drawing on the board. I mean the main skills I think are in how you use the tools that are available to you to glue the team together you know and it has to be still a learning experience for us really but we are getting better I know using ticketing systems and Kanban to bring people together, make people know what's expected of them, you know, get them to take ownership of stuff and then yes obviously it's a bit of an art to knowing which of these things to deploy best to solve the problem you know you need a conference call? Do you need a chat? Do you need to just comment on the ticket?

> **Commented [Author358]:** Use the right communication and collaboration tools

This kind of thing, different people need to be dealt with a bit differently. Some people, definitely people in IT, I think are more inclined to well there can be some people who are not really that, what can I say social in the way that they work. So, I'm very social in the way that I work. I prefer to talk to somebody on the phone about something, but there definitely will be preferred to use chat app rather than talking. So, I suppose you need to adapt to the individual people that know how to best communicate with them. If you're constantly asking someone to go on a call with you that kind of stuff, and they don't like working in that ways, it's not going to be positive. So yeah, I know which people I just without even informing them, I just called them we just chat. Other people I need to be a bit more gently, you know, is it okay to talk, what time you free, or some people you know you just have a chat to. So, in all, you need to be patient and understands people's way of working whereas that's obviously a lot different from just talking to somebody who's sitting in the same room.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: Yes, it's about the tools as well just leveraging those tools in the best way. Was going to say I find it quite challenging and I can't wait to go back to the office, to be honest at least a couple of days a week.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Interviewee: Meetings on something you know, some of the stuff we're doing is quite in-depth and I think that kind of stuff is much better to be face-to-face drawing things out and there's a bit of a barrier there.

Interviewer: So, what are the most important skills apart from being patient, so, then what are the most important skills and attributes for a global virtual manager?

Interviewee: I wasn't really sure what to say on this to be honest I mean the most important skills definitely are to be able to…, well, as long as you've got the right tools and communication tool to make you know the collaboration and communication tools available to youit's about how you use those tools and how you encourage the team to use those tools. So I mean, I know we skipped a bit about the different types of technologies but like for example we avoid at all costs using email for communication.

I think you know using email is just the information in those emails just goes into a black hole and it's lost forever kind of thing so it's just leveraging the tools that you've got to build up almost a knowledge base that we are using Jira, Confluence. So instead of emailing people and having a discussion in that way or on a track, make sure that that information is in a ticket, so you can look back in years to come and understand that the

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Commented [Author359]: *Use the right communication and collaboration tools*

Commented [Author360]: It is harder to get over a complex business problem to a remote team

Commented [Author361]: Understand communication tools and process

Commented [Author362]: Virtual teams avoid using emails

Commented [Author363]: Information in emails is easily forgotten.

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decisions that were made. In order to do that thing so we're using the tools in that way to record what you're doing almost. I mean that we got, has two teams are not virtual as well but it's just some of the things that I was going to say fine yeah.., yeah understand just knowing how and when to communicate with people.., with people I think..

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Is a bit of an art form, to be honest, that needs to be mastered art far.., far from nothing on top of that, obviously, they're all the same management things apply I think it's just how you adapt to that and to the virtual teams keeping in touch with people, how do you get glue people, how you glue people together with all of these communication tools and ticketing tools to make them feel like they're in a team as one. Rather than individual people sitting thousands of miles apart, that's the...

Interviewer: I guess we have a maximum of three minutes late. Is it alright?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Interviewee: That's fine I mean I can leave at nine o'clock on the dot all I need to do switch my best topic, silence..,

Interviewer: So yes, I am already two questions late. So, what do you think makes for the successful management of a global virtual team?

Interviewee: Must be building up trust with your team members. So that you can enable them and building up the trust of them, so that they can work autonomously, they can take ownership of things. But you still have the feedback on what they're doing, and the structure around the team in place to make them accountable for things, so that they have visibility of what they're doing?

Interviewer: Hmm. And do you have any recommendations to help managers to manage the virtual team or officially?

Interviewee: I mean the main ones I come across is using the tools that you've got available to you in the best possible way. So, don't use emails, use the ticketing systems to record the narrative that's going on so you can look back at it. I mean, we look back at things we've done years ago and understand why they were done in such a way, because we link tickets to source code you can always trace it back and see why this was done, so don't use email. Then use chat but just be aware and you need to take that valuable information out of those tools into something that's going to record that for future... future reference. I think to talk on mobiles - would be talked directly on the phone as much as

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Commented [Author364]: Jira and Confluence as a knowledge base

Commented [Author365]: Managing a team

Commented [Author366]: Managing geographically dispersed employees

Commented [Author367]: Management through ICT

Commented [Author368]: Importance of trust

Commented [Author369]: *Facilitate accountability to build trust*

possible I would say. I think that's a much more I mean even though you don't have all of the same things as we said about face to face, it's still a much more efficient way of communicating than over email or over chat.

Interviewer: I see. So...

Interviewee: And don't do, don't think that you need a conference call to talk on the phone. You can just, you know, agree to talk on the phone for a short period of time without having to book a timeslot because I think booking time slots naturally just means you use the whole amount of time trying to avoid that at the moment. As well you know have those regular feedback sessions they daily catch-ups with the team just where everybody keeps the visibility of what everybody's doing even if it doesn't it's not particularly relevant but it's good for everybody to know what everybody else is doing. Have a picture in their mind know what's going on out there.

Interviewer: Hmm. Thank you.

Interviewee: Yeah make sure.

Interviewer: May I ask you your job title?

Interviewee: Yes, I'm application engineering lead.

Interviewer: Yeah and the type of business of your company?

Interviewee: Type of business?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I mean it's obviously [Company Name] but it's-- we're in their capital markets department so that's one of the equity trading systems so where our team is at the moment it's like building, building and supporting monitoring tools for the trading systems. So I'm working on a big project which is building a new monitoring tool for the trading systems so it takes in all of logging Diagnostics about the trading system that they can use for analysis.

Interviewer: Yeah. And the number of people you're managing is?

Interviewee: As a line manager, I think it's gonna be seven as of Monday in terms of technical lead for the team it's I guess up to about twelve let's say 12.

Interviewer: Okay, so in total, 12?

Interviewee: It's totally 12, as a line manager and then the others are people that are seconded to the project. It's all in a different Department I'm still kind of providing input.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. I will let you go it's 9 o'clock. Thank you have a nice day.

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Answers to follow-up questions

Question: Is it possible to estimate how much does your company save up by running virtual teams compared to hiring 100% local people? (If not, please explain why.)

Answer: Person for person, it's clearly cheaper - I don't have visibility of a lot of salary information but I would expect somewhere in the region of about 50-70%. I would question the true cost saving as offshore teams are a lot larger than historical local teams and seem to perform repeating / manual tasks rather than focusing on automation and efficiency. Regardless of location, I would question the real savings made when comparing larger, relatively unskilled / inexperienced teams vs smaller teams containing skilled and experienced staff.

> **Commented [Author372]:** Perception of cost saving

Question: Would you consider yourself as a transactional leader or transformational leader? Please explain. From your point of views, transformational or transactional leadership is more effective in virtual teams? Please explain why and how, if possible.

Answer: Hard to comment as I'm not a particularly experienced leader! The team I am working with at the moment is finding it hard to deliver for various reasons (mainly because the majority are new to the organisation and/or technology we are using), so I think at the moment at least I/we are just trying to get things done in the most basic sense, deadlines, task monitoring etc. A couple of the team members are doing quite well, and I do try to always make it clear to people that it's up to them to make things happen, and if they can do that then they have free rein to take on more responsibility.

Question: With the Covid-19, many global virtual team members are currently working from home instead from their offices as before. Do you think home-based global virtual teams will be common in the long run, post Covid-19?

From your point of view, what are the support policies and management practices companies need to provide global virtual team members who work from home to enhance their performance? (i.e. creating home office, work-related tools, gym workout, health and safety, flexibility, childcare, team-building activities, etc…)

Answer:

I do think home working will be a lot more common post-Covid and my employer seems very happy with how things are going and the current level of productivity. I think most people are working longer hours due to reduced commuting time and the blurred boundary between work and home life. Many team members seem to prefer working from home due to the obvious benefits in reducing commuting time and expense. I think this kind of arrangement works well for some, but I do also think it's vital that employers encourage returning to the office as much as possible in future. Those starting their careers or trying to make contacts in a new organisation will find it hard to network and build experience in the way we have done so in the past if this is not the case. In my opinion the current level of home working is functioning well as an emergency measure but should not continue longer than it has to.

I would like to strike a balance in future coming to the office maybe 3 days a week - during this time we could focus on meetings and collaboration with a couple of days at home being reserved for focussing on getting work done without the distraction of conference calls and constant messaging / emails to deal with! There is no need to be in the office 5 days a week that's for sure.

Interview number 6

Type of interview: Video call interview

Date: 18 June 2020

Location: London

Duration: 00:56:01

Job title of the interviewee: Head of Capital Markets Support Services

Gender: Male

Age range: 50-60

Team size: 80 people (based in Sri Lanka, Romania, Milan, London and Fort Mill (US))

Size of company: 4,000-5000 people

Global virtual management experience: 10

Interviewer: Thank you very much for joining my research. So, the topic is about managing global teams in the London Fintech industry.

Interviewee: No problem.

Interviewer: Yes, the reason why I do this is that I'm very interested in-- my dissertation at master's degree course is about work from home, and then I realize…

Interviewee: Say it again, sorry, you just broke in and out.

Interviewer: That's okay, the reason why I do this research is that is previously…

Interviewee: You're still dropping.

Interviewer: What happened?

Interviewee: It's too [unintelligible 00:00:50]

Interviewer: Yes, when we chat it was all right.

Interviewee: No, it's fine, you're back now.

Interviewer: I'm back now. Okay, so, may I ask you what does global virtual team mean to you?

Interviewee: Which one, what does a global team or is it what a virtual team?

Interviewer: Yes. What does it mean to you?

Interviewee: Global virtual team. It just means to me, a team distributed in different locations, it could be-- not necessarily in international, but generally, it's international, but it could be in different parts of the UK. So, for me, it just means-- if you say, global virtual team, I would say that's a distributed team working in different locations and communicating using teleconferencing, phone, etc. or chat. So, not co-located basically.

Commented [Author373]: Managing geographically dispersed team members through various collaborative communication technologies

Interviewer: Yes, and what are the business drivers for virtual management in the London FinTech industry that you think?

Interviewee: Do, you mean for my company?

Interviewer: Yes, for your company, for example.

Interviewee: So, drivers for it, I guess getting the right skills at the right price point, opening ourselves up to different locations allows us to-- I guess, broadened this net of resource pool about where we can look, so, we can look in different locations for the right people. Obviously cost, so, it's about-- depending on the role, we can potentially go to cheaper locations if it's more of a support role, but if it needs specialization, we may have to bring that into a high-cost location. Having said that, we could find those specializations also in the low-cost location, that's not to say that people haven't got the skills in the low-cost location as well.

Commented [Author374]: Cost saving

But the other thing actually is also, for my company is also a risk, so, we want to have people not in one location, just in case something happens within that location. So, some network issue or some event, so, we spread the risk. And there's an element of following the Sun, time zone, so, we want people to be working their standard day, to be able to achieve what we need to achieve to run the business. So, we don't want necessarily people in London to have to work late, so, working overtime, just because they have to stay until the system shuts down and then they're making their changes, etc. If you've got somebody in the right location, they can just be doing that as part of their standard working day and that saves on stress on the people, but it also saves up cost. Because people aren't having to work overtime, they're just picking up those duties that have to be done at a different time as part of all normal working days.

Commented [Author375]: Reduce external environment-related risks

Commented [Author376]: Follow the sun

Commented [Author377]: Cost saving

Interviewer: So, by hiring people in the other part of the world, so, you don't have to pay overtime for people in London.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: Yes, that's another driver, yes.

Interviewer: One of my interviewees, he said that actually, people often think about global virtual team as a way to save cost, but it's just perception of cost, it doesn't actually save-- a cost-saving solution, because you have to, for example, in London, you hire 10 people, in India, you have to hire 100 people to do the same job and...

Interviewee: Well, I don't fully agree with that to be fair, that's not-- I think that's no, that's not true, because it depends on the role. So, we hire in Sri Lanka and I wouldn't say... So, it depends on the role, if you want some real deep engineers, then you may not find that in Siri Lanka, there were certain-- like DevOps people, for example, it's really hard to find, it's not a small-- it's quite a small pool of resources who have got those technical skills, so, it's very hard to find those people. But if you want a UNIX engineer or Windows engineer, you can find those people. And if you invest in them and spend time bringing them up to speed, I think they're comparable to a similar person in London to do that role.

So, I don't fully agree with that, but having said that, I think you do need people in-- the way we work because we're not a big-- we're not like [Big Bank Name], where you got people effectively distributed all over the world, it is very much London centric. So, you do need people in London, close to the hub, close to understanding that business drivers, the priorities, who can then feed that back to the guys who are offshore. But I don't fully agree that you need more people and therefore it's not cost-effective, I don't think that's necessarily true. But there is an element of that, but it's not-- it depends, you can get yourself in that situation, but it's not-- I think with the guys we've got in Sri Lanka now, they're almost comparable to the London guys for the role they do. Some of them, so, yes, I don't agree.

Interviewer: I see, that make sense, but actually when I talk to my friends in HRBP of a big IT company in Vietnam, and she also said that in Vietnam, for the same job, like the big organization, they have to hire many people, whilst for the same department in Europe, for example, they hire fewer people. And she explained to me between friends, that it's because of the attitude of the Vietnamese people, they are not as hard-working or not as responsible, did you see that-?

Interviewee: Yes, I do see that there's a cultural difference if I look at Sri Lanka for example. So, there's an element of-- it's not necessarily hard-working, I don't agree with that, it's more-- what is it? It's more proactively, so, I'll give you an example. So, if something breaks in the morning, so, Tuesday morning at 2 o'clock, something breaks and somebody will do whatever it is, log on to our server, whatever and fix, delete the file

Commented [Author378]: Evaluate skills of employees in offshore locations

Commented [Author379]: Further discussion about cost-saving as a business driver for global virtual teams

Commented [Author380]: Further discussion about cost-saving as a business driver for global virtual teams

that's causing the problem and fix the issue. The next morning, the same thing happens, they'll do the same thing again, next morning the same thing happens, they'll do the same thing again. No one questions, why is it happening? and then fixes the original problem, so, they don't have to do it again. There's a little bit of-- I don't know, culturally of just not looking deep, asking why is, why, why, why, why and getting back and solving the root problem. Rather there's, let's just say they continue and fix it and continue and fixing it, and what's the problem, we've fixed it, why are you complaining, we fixed it, rather than… Actually, I think in London, that the guys are a bit more I actually want to fix it, so, it doesn't happen again. And the same with some of our-- when we're rolling out software, for example, we really want it to be automated, we just want to press a button and it all just rolls out. And there are two reasons for that, one is you don't need so many people, but two, it's also more reliable, if you're repeatedly doing it, you're doing it every time, in two different environments, you can repeat that and it's reliable every time. Whereas in Sri Lanka, they wouldn't make it automated, they rely on lots of people manually doing stuff, and they go, well, we've done it, what's the problem, it's just thinking about why that's an issue, why that's a problem, and it's just scratching a bit deeper and going back. And that I don't think comes as naturally to question it, I think it's more natural just to throw people at the problem, as opposed to trying to solve the problem, if you see what I mean and just, so, work around it, rather than fix it. So, there is-- I think there's an element of that, I would say and therefore some people might say oh, you need more people, because effectively, you've got this army of people who are fixing issues, regularly fixing issues. Whereas if you had a team in London, they would just get it right and go back and fix the root cause, so, you don't need so many people to do it. So, yes, there is an element of that, I think.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: So, I'm not convinced it's hard-working, I think it's working, it was a bit more, I don't want to say intelligence, but it's just a bit more thinking a bit deeper about the issue and about the problems and not thinking, throwing people at the issue is solving it. There's definitely in Sri Lanka, we'll just put 10 people on it and that one and that will make it work and it does, but it's actually, this would be a bit more clever about this, analyse why it's an issue, go back and fix it properly, so, you don't need an army of 10 people. And Siri Lanka, maybe that cost less money because if the resources are relatively cheap or they can charge those resources to the company if they're outsourcing, they're not incentivized to actually fix the root cause as well, because that might be a problem.

Interviewer: I see, like I read about Google, the way Google manages-- Google management technique, like when something happens, when an incident happens, after

> **Commented [Author381]:** Difference in problem approach

that, they would analyze why this happened, how lucky we were, because like it's something we haven't prepared, but somehow, we were lucky enough to fix the issue although we haven't prepared for that, so, next time, maybe we're not lucky like that, so, also, they note it, about how lucky we were as well, as a factor to fix the system.

Interviewee: I mean, that's a technique, what's in The Seven Whys, isn't it, you ask why seven times to try and get to the root cause, why did it happen, and somebody responded, okay, why did that do that? If you ask why seven times, you get back down to the actual issue and that's what you need to fix, I think is one of the techniques.

Interviewer: Wow, seven seem to be a magical number.

Interviewee: It's a lot, isn't it? Yes, yes, exactly, I'd hope it would be too. Yes, seven seems to be a bit too much, but yes. But I know sometimes it's funny, you ask - you do ask sometimes and in Sri Lanka, I guess you say why did it happen? They go because this file turned up. Okay, fine, why did the file turn up then? Okay, because this team put it there. Why did they put it there, why did they do it this time, not that time? You keep on that and I guess they are, you know… So, I'm looking at cultural differences, there is a tendency in Sri Lanka, just to stop at the first why and that's enough, and not actually dig deeper and keep asking the question and get to the actual bottom of the issue.

Interviewer: I see, in Vietnam, we say before you say anything, you have to roll your tongue, seven times and if people really do that we would not say much.

Interviewee: Wow, slow conversation, yes.

Interviewer: So, [Name] told me that you were his ex-boss and you are very senior, so, may I ask you...

Interviewee: Yes, go on.

Interviewer: So, how many people are you managing at the moment?

Interviewee: It's changed actually, so, it was about 80 I think, and now, it's-- I don't know, now, it's about 30 but it's due to - it will be going back up to 80 again soon, so, it's about 80 people.

Interviewer: Yes, so, where are they located?

Interviewee: So, if I think about 3 weeks ago, it was Sri Lanka, Romania, Milan, London, and Fort Mill in America.

Interviewer: So, how many years of experience do you have is in managing global virtual teams?

Interviewee: Same as [Name], 10 years probably, something like that.

Interviewer: 10 years, so, may I ask, what are the key challenges that you've faced with when you manage a global virtual team?

Interviewee: Key challenges? I guess the key challenge is communication obviously, I guess that's one everyone says. There's a challenge and I guess it all possibly boils down to communication. But getting the teams who are remote to understand the priorities and the drivers and the culture and the expectations. So, to understand what they should be working on, and why they should be doing that, why this is important, what the business is driving to do? So, just really getting them to understand their place in the organization and what the expectations are from them to deliver. Keeping them informed is quite difficult, how do you actually keep them informed of changes, so they're aware of what's going on, aware of the drivers.

Cultural, obviously, cultural differences, appreciating how they work, versus how the local team works, versus how the Romanian team works, there's always cultural differences and expectations and different aspirations I would say as well. So, people are expecting-- some people love structure. I've been here one year; this is my grade. I've been here 2 years; this is my grade. Whereas, in other locations, it's much more relaxed about things like that, for example, people aren't so concerned about that, they're more-- it's not top of their priority list. There's understanding there are cultural differences.

Interviewer: Yes, so, why keep them informed difficult is difficult to you?

Interviewee: Why is it?

Interviewer: Yes, why is it, we have so many communication media.

Interviewee: Because you're not having a corridor conversation, you're not turning to them and saying-- and the local team all working together, would hear somebody come in and start talking about an initiative, you'd have a corridor conversation or a meeting and maybe come back and start talking to somebody about that, and people can hear that and you know, it's less formal because people can overhear conversations or have a corridor conversations or a meeting, and maybe come back and start talking about an initiative, you'd have a corridor conversation or meeting and maybe come back to somebody about that.

And people can hear that and it's less formal because people can overhear conversations or have corridor conversations or conversations by the coffee machine, all that kind of stuff, bump into people, do you know this is going on? Whereas if they're offshore, you have to

actually formalize it, and think about all right, what are the big things, the big things usually are fine, it's more of the smaller thing, right? What are the things that I need to cascade to people, to make sure they understand? And even then, because it's a different communication, what's the word? A different way of communicating, it's much more formalized, it's difficult to sometimes get across what we're trying to achieve I think, in-- I don't know, it's difficult to describe, but when you're having to think about right, I need to formally communicate this back.

You just have a brain dump of this, this, this, this, you're not going into any detail, not really putting any-- having a chat about it, to discuss it at any depth, it's more-- it's a push, if you see what I mean, of information, rather than a two-way thing, a two-way conversation you might have by a coffee machine. So, it's harder I think, to keep people informed of-- and you've got to practice to remember to do it, and remember all these little things. So, yes, the big things, they might get 70%, but it's missing the 30%, and missing those nuances and missing that-- well, they said this and they responded like that, which if you're local in the same office, you get that backward and forwards of understanding. If you're sitting near the customer or the business-to-business team, you might get that backward and forward, so, you actually get all those different nuances and priorities and understanding that you don't necessarily get if you're not co-located.

But interestingly, that's why I think this working from home thing, it almost puts everybody on the same footing, so, everyone's now equal because no one's in the office, so, it actually now doesn't make a difference, it makes managing a virtual team a much more level playing field and everybody's in the same boat. So, it's interesting what we're doing, I think it's probably a better way of managing a virtual team if everybody is virtual. If you have 30% of the people in the same office and 70% in a different office or at different geographies, then those that call 30% will have an advantage over the rest of the 70%, I think. Whereas if everybody's working from home, everyone's distributed, then everybody's in the same boat, everybody works the same. It's like when you have a meeting and everybody's in the meeting room except for five people, those five people just sit there quietly, because they're dialed in on the phone, all the discussion is with the people in the meeting room. So, it's almost like you have to have everybody co-located or everybody should be distributed, it should be one or the other I think, it's probably the best way of working. Now, I know that's never gonna happen...

Interviewer: You never know.

Interviewee: ... but in my opinion, unless this goes on forever, in my opinion, that's probably a better way of working, I don't know if you're gonna have global teams. The best

thing is co-location obviously, everyone's together in the same office, but if you're not going to do that, you should probably have everybody remote.

Interviewer: I see, so in terms of communication tools, how about your use of email, messenger, conference, and things like that, which media do you use the most?

Interviewee: Skype at the moment.

Interviewer: Skype at the moment.

Interviewee: Skype for business, but we're getting rid of it and moving-- so, we use Skype for meetings basically, and then Microsoft teams for chat, as well as Skype, Skype, and Teams for a chat and then email. So, I would say-- email is just constant email, so, everyone's communicating on email all the time, there's a lot of Microsoft teams chat and for meetings and Skype.

Interviewer: How is email, because it seems that you will have a huge amount of emails every day, isn't it, so...?

Interviewee: Yes, if I look now, what is it? I don't know, I've got usually got about 10,000 unread emails, it's crazy ridiculous, so, I get an email a minute pretty much, it's not right, it's crazy. So, the culture is still-- it's getting better, it's moving away from email more to chat, but it's still very email dependent, so, yes.

Interviewer: So, some of my interviewees, they say that email is not seen as efficient, because of too many. And some people they-- even like one interviewee said that we need to educate people on how to use email because sometimes they don't go straight forward, they go through a longer route, especially if you're senior and they're of a lower hierarchy than you, then they tend to go around the issue, instead of just saying no, something like that, so, it takes too much time.

Interviewee: Yes, the problem with email is you can send it to 50 people and then included that conversation, do they all need to be included in that conversation? Probably not, it's just-- it just gets in the way a bit. I mean, it does have its place, but yes, it is overused, and people should use chat more, I think. We've got Microsoft Teams, but I'm not sure it's that great really, Zoom, we're not allowed to use, I was gonna see how many emails I've got, but … Yes, email is a struggle and just to keep up with email, and it can be very distracting, because you're getting so many emails, it's very difficult to focus on stuff if you're constantly bombarded by the next email. But I'm included in CC, on so many emails, I just go and delete without even thinking about reading, I mean, I've set it up now,

so, if it's to me, it comes up having a different colour, so, I can spot the ones that are directed at me, and all the others I pretty much just go and delete.

Interviewer: Wow, that's a brilliant idea.

Interviewee: Yes, it's just a way of sifting through some of the emails, so, I can of can detect the stuff that I don't need to read and I can just delete immediately, I can quickly go through emails, but even then you're still left with a whole army of emails left behind, so, it's difficult, email is not great.

Commented [Author391]: Evaluate the effectiveness of email

Interviewer: So, what is the greatest tool that you are using?

Interviewee: Sorry, which...?

Interviewer: Which one is the best? which one is the best tool?

Interviewee: The best for communication?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: I think teams will be-- the Teams will be the best, Microsoft Teams.

Commented [Author392]: Evaluate the efectiveness of Microsoft Team

Interviewer: Microsoft Teams. So, do you have problems communicating in terms of language, because people-- for those who English is not their native language, so, do you have problems when you communicate virtually?

Interviewee: Not usually, no.

Interviewer: So, it's all right?

Interviewee: I mean I don't, because I'm a native English speaker, but I can see sometimes, some of the guys in Romania or Milan or Sri Lanka, it's hard for them to be able to communicate and in a meeting to be able to hold their own basically and be able to communicate effectively in the meeting. Having said that, it's why I actually-- and the Russ-- you know, we have Russians as well, Russians are usually, I think they struggle the most. So, yes, sometimes, yes, of course, it is difficult when people are trying to speak and it's not their native language, it's hard for them to communicate, absolutely, as I'm sure it's difficult to learn English when you're in a room with people who are talking quickly in English.

Commented [Author393]: Non-native English-speaking virtual team members struggle understanding people with heavy accent.

Interviewer: Yes, your English, I can understand you quite clear, but some people, they speak quite quickly, like [Name], for example, sometimes I struggle to understand him.

Interviewee: So, you chose-- so, the one everyone talks about is [Name]. I don't know, so, [Name], everyone always used to complain about [Name]. And I remember, at work, people would look at [Name], and [Name], you know what [Name] is like, he just talks,

talks, talks, talks, talks. So, people would look at [Name] and then [Name] would march away, he'd bark orders and suddenly march away. I remember several times somebody, people turning to me and say, "Can you tell me what he said?" Because they found it really hard because he speaks so quickly that if you're not a native speaker, it's really hard to follow.

Interviewer: So, do you have-- like also, like in some culture, they tend to say yes, yes, yes, even though they don't understand, or they do not absolutely agree with you or something like that. So, in a virtual meeting, if that happens, do you have any way to prevent it or to control it? Like you hold a meeting and you want to make sure everybody understands what you're saying, do you have anyway?

Interviewee: I've got nothing that I can formally say I use, but if somebody is saying that, I would just directly question them and say, did you understand that? So, you're right, you get some people saying yes, yes, yes, but I would just-- you can see when that's happening, so, you ask them directly and you give that person an opportunity to say "no, that's not clear". So, if you ask them directly, and say "is that clear"? Then they won't say yes? They'll usually say "actually...". Or you word it, to say, such and such, do you need a bit more information on that, or is that clear to you? And then that gives them an opportunity to not directly say "no, I don't understand", but you know, ask for some extra information, for example.

 So, you phrase it such that you're not putting them on the spot to say "no, I didn't understand anything". But you've given them an opportunity to ask for more information or ask for it to be repeated. So you just-- yes, that's just a-- that's just listening. I can't say there's a form-- I'm haven't got any formal approach to how that happens, I just pick up on it and notice. Usually, if I know some-- you know, I know the people, I know when they're-- I know if they're likely to understand, if it's my team, I would know if they're likely to understand anyway, and if they're just agreeing, then I would allow them the space to ask a question.

Interviewer: Do you have a question?

Interviewee: Starting to wake up.

Interviewer: May I ask, what does trust mean to you?

Interviewee: What does what?

Interviewer: Trust T-R-U-S-T.

Interviewee: Trust?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: What does trust mean to me?

Interviewer: Yes, in your working environment.

Interviewee: How does trust….

Interviewer: So, how do you build trust in global virtual teams?

Interviewee: I think if you're open with people, and they're open back with you, you build trust, you know if could talk on a level where you're slightly less formal, I guess, when you can say things that potentially are not-- what's the word? - that could be used against you, I guess. If you could-- you can be open and frank and have a frank conversation about work or other people or how things are going. And you can open up about your feelings about how things are going, then you're effectively sharing and building trust that way. If you are working to a common goal, then you build trust, you're trying... If you align people I guess, you all feel like you're working together as a team towards something, achieving something or supporting something or building something. If you can align people in the same, but they're all working together and aligned, then you can build trust as well. Clear goals, I guess.

Interviewer: Clear goals. So how do you build it? How can we build trust with people?

Interviewee: Communication, conversation.

Interviewer: Communication, conversation, it's harder in virtual teams, because you don't have face-to-face communication.

Interviewee: Yes, I guess so, yes, it can be, I guess so. But things like-- I mean, you do it, well, you have a face-to-face conversation now with videoconferencing. So, I think you just build that rapport, you don't just work-- talk about, if I think about my direct reports, you build trust by ensuring that you understand them, you listen to them, you will support them, I think is also quite important. So, if they've got ideas, where somebody's disagreeing with them, you back them up and you make sure you're seen to back them up, so, you put-- you know, you're working on their side.

Interviewer: I see.

Interviewee: Maybe open communication, maybe not just talking about work as well, maybe other-- one-to-one, you talk about things outside of work, to begin with, just to build some kind of rapport.

Interviewer: Yes, do you have scheduled for those one -to-one conversation?

Commented [Author397]: Build rapport with team members

Commented [Author398]: Augment team orientation

Commented [Author399]: Enhance opportunities for collaborative effort

Commented [Author400]: Build rapport with team members

Commented [Author401]: Build rapport with team members

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes, is it weekly, monthly?

Interviewee: Weekly.

Interviewer: Weekly, with all your staff?

Interviewee: With my remote staff, it was weeks ago. Now, not with all my staff, but next, but now, I'm gonna be having to do it with all my staff, yes. I mean, there are some people I talk to 10 times a day anyway, so, there's not such a demand to have a weekly one-to-one. However, I think, it's getting to the point now where-- and I have to say, I've just transitioned actually. So, it will make sense that I will set up for the ones who aren't doing it already I'll set up a weekly one to one..

Interviewer: I see, how do you motivate your team members remotely?

Interviewee: How do you motivate them?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Again, it's part of that teamwork, isn't it? It's about having shared goals, shared responsibilities, we're a team, this is what we're working towards, this is why we're doing it, making you feel like a team I suppose, allowing people to work within that team.

Interviewer: Do you have activities to build teamwork? Like for example, like a virtual bar or...?

Interviewee: Yes, no, I don't actually, we don't do that. It's interesting, so-- and this is kind of a way of global working. So, what I've noticed is that you've got your global team, so, we've got people working in London and reporting to me ultimately. But also, there's a local team, right? So, there's a team in Sri Lanka, outside my team, there are lots of teams in Sri Lanka. In Romania, there are lots of teams in Romania. And there's a local HR, and I think in Romania, well, and in Siri Lanka, both of them. What they do is a very good job of effectively building that local community as well as your reporting back to London. So, it's almost like-- yes, we're working for this London team, but we're also part of a wider community in Sri Lanka or the wider community in Romania. And they do-- and they do-- they're kind of more locally, they'll do the virtual-- not even virtual, but they'll go out for drinks or they'll go out for knowledge sharing or-- every lunchtime somebody is demoing what they're working on.

And I think I've seen that what's working really quite well, so, yes, you've got a vertical into your virtual global team, but you've got a horizontal kind of-- into your local community as well. So, I don't think it's necessary, the vertical, that necessarily needs to

provide that, though it does help, so, we would have someone-- you know, I would go to Romania, I would go to Sri Lanka, I would meet the people, for example, and then you could-- at that point have-- you know, go out for drinks, etc. We don't have a global-- we don't have a global [virtual] bar, because I don't think if you had 80 people on zoom, I don't think that would work, while trying to talk, I don't think you could do that. So, I think prior to lockdown, what we were trying to do there is, every now and again people would go to different locations. So, I went to Sri Lanka twice, at the start of the-- end of last year, star of this year. I went to Romania, some of the DBAs (Database Administrators) went to Romania and Sri Lanka. So, you can kind of build some teamwork that way, but it's hard obviously now when you can't travel.

Interviewer: I see, may I ask, what are the differences between managing a global virtual team and a traditional team, in terms of management and leadership skills?

Interviewee: You just have to be-- like I said, you've got more to think about, like I said about you've got to more formally manage your communication, remember to do it, remember to set up sessions with one-to-one, to ensure that communication. It's easier to let the communication drift, but you have to force yourself to do that communication that you wouldn't have to do otherwise in a local team because you're just sitting next to each other and you can turn to each other and chat. So, therefore, you have to more formally have team meetings and more formally set up one to ones and more formally have information cascades.

You have to appreciate-- I think, it's all the stuff we've just been talking about really, but you've got to think about the cultural differences and what people may want in a different location and understand. Even understand hiring and compensation in all different locations, and what their business continuity is and what happens if there's-- Sri Lanka, they might be in an earthquake zone and in April and it rains a lot, and you get power cuts and all this kind of stuff. It's different, it's just a different way of working. You just got to appreciate the different way of working and be sympathetic of-- people might have a 2-hour commute in awful traffic to travel 5 miles. So, be sympathetic to that and not ask them to do it, for example.

Interviewer: In Vietnam, sometimes we lost the internet and the government explained that because the shark bites the cable because some people believe that because the Chinese government cut the cable.

Interviewee: Cutting it, yes. We had-- because we used to run the trading system for the [Name], down in South Africa. So, the cables used to run all the way up from London

Commented [Author403]: Develop a multidimensional virtual team building framework

Commented [Author404]: Virtual hangouts

Commented [Author405]: Develop a multidimensional virtual team building framework

Commented [Author406]: *Involves excessive and formal communication*

Commented [Author407]: Show empathy

down to South Africa. And every now and again the connections will be down because literally, it's running up all of Africa, so, somebody would dig up the cables and some farmers will be digging up the cables, because they could sell these cables, right?

Interviewer: True.

Interviewee: So, they'll dig up the cables and sell them, and then the connections would be down. Sad to have all this redundancy coming up through Africa, all these buried cables, it's crazy, but yes, every now and again no connections, because somebody cut the cables and-- whatever, literally digging them up and selling them.

Commented [Author408]: Technology breakdown

Interviewer: It happens in Vietnam too.

Interviewee: Yes, I'm sure, I'm sure.

Interviewer: But what would you do in those case, becomes for a virtual team, communication media is very important, so, if the internet goes down or something like that, what would you do?

Interviewee: Well, that's why we-- I talked earlier about risk, that's why we have people in different locations, is we wouldn't try and put everybody in Sri Lanka, we'd have other people who could cover. So, if-- obviously you got mobile phones usually, there's usually, we've not had it, so, there's no communication. But if the internet goes down, yes they're working from homes, there's-- they're not working basically, so, you have to turn to teams in the other locations to cover.

Commented [Author409]: *Reduce external environment-related risks*

Interviewer: Do you have any like back up plan or something like that? Like did you prepare for a backup plan, prepare for those...?

Interviewee: Yes, business continuity, yes, so, we've got multiple sites, so we've got-- in Sri Lanka there's a primary site and a secondary site. So, if the primary site has a problem, they could go to the secondary site for example, and then if the whole of Sri Lanka goes down, we still got London, we've also got Romania, we've also got America, but we don't leverage that hardly, we'only got one [unintelligible] it's mainly in my area, London and Sri Lanka.

Commented [Author410]: *Reduce external environment-related risks*

Interviewer: I see, that's very interesting, you know, when I read about this topic, it's very interesting that many research about managing global virtual teams are based on student teams. So, they recruit students and they work in different teams and they pretend they're in different areas. So, actually, it doesn't base on the actual virtual teams, and very rare that their interview managers, so, do you think that virtual management now is so popular and there should be more research about that, but actually this area is very young.

Interviewee: Really?

Interviewer: Yes, very young, I haven't seen much research about it that work with proper virtual managers.

Interviewee: Yes, and you think it's so widespread, it'll be quite common techniques and stuff, but yes, it's interesting.

Interviewer: Yes, so many, think more about assumptions are in the context, a fixed context that is built by student teams rather than the real world.

Interviewee: Yes, okay, interesting.

Interviewer: So, in those teams, they don't have to deal with the shark biting the cable or the farmer...

Interviewee: Yes, yes, exactly, that's right, it's just all theoretical.

Interviewer: So, may I ask you, what do you think managers need to be effective in this area? Skill, knowledge, attitude, or something?

Interviewee: Again, is any different to not-- I don't think there's any different necessarily, just standard management skills, maybe you have to be a bit more-- and this doesn't suit me, but maybe it needs to be-- -you need to be a bit more organized to make sure you are communicating. Yes, you have to think, you have to be prepared to travel, I guess, you know not everybody is. Yes, the same skills really.

Interviewer: Same skills.

Interviewee: I mean just about communication, it's about setting goals, vision, building that team, I don't think it's necessarily any different, you just got to be a bit more organized about communication.

Interviewer: What are the most important skills for an effective global virtual manager?

Interviewee: Hang on, sorry, I just got a call coming in.

Interviewer: Oh, we can pause.

Interviewee: No, it's all right, I've disconnected it, it's fine.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Sorry, what's the question, it just sorts of went blank because I was being called.

Interviewer: Yes, so...

Interviewee: Sorry, what was the question?

Interviewer: The question is, what are the most important skills for, what are the most important skills for an effective global virtual manager?

Interviewee: It's back to the previous questions. Leadership, communication, listening skills, I guess.

Interviewer: And organize, being organized.

Interviewee: Organization, yes, being organized, yes, exactly.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Or at least, you don't have to be super organized, but ensure you're organized enough to certainly one to ones and cascades and communicating effectively, yes.

Commented [Author413]: *Organisational skills*

Interviewer: Do you think that the first-hand experience in managing virtual teams is important? Like if somebody doesn't have experience in managing a global virtual team before, do you think they will struggle?

Interviewee: Yes, potentially, yes, they might do, it depends, they might find it difficult for having to-- because you have to be inclusive I guess, and they might find it, it's harder, it's easier to turn to the people who are local than remote, because you have to make more of an effort, so, you have to make sure you're inclusive and maybe for some people, that doesn't come naturally, they'll look at the local team or struggle to communicate effectively. So, I think-- I don't know if maybe it's about personality, I don't know, maybe it's about the experience, it's probably a bit of both.

Commented [Author414]: Experience helps to develop leadership styles and skills

Interviewer: Oh, so, it's over 47 minutes, can I get just like 5 minutes more?

Interviewee: Yes, it's fine.

Interviewer: Okay. So, I may have a question, do you have any recommendation directed toward helping managers to manage virtual teams more efficiently?

Interviewee: Recommendation to help?

Interviewer: Yes, recommendation, yes, to help managers to manage their team more effectively?

Interviewee: Again, it's kind of the stuff we talked about, right? Recommendation, a specific pointer, communication to be inclusive, I think.

Interviewer: Being inclusive.

Interviewee: Because what you don't want is a certain people in your virtual team to feel that they're not part of the team, so, you need to make sure that everyone feels included. So, everyone-- we need to feel equally important in this virtual team.

Interviewer: And what do you think makes for the successful management of a global virtual team?

Interviewee: Is there any difference in the successful management of a non-virtual global team, I don't know, are you talking about-- I mean, the mark of successes is always about teamwork and delivery and efficiency, I don't think that's any different in a global virtual team as a co-located team.

Interviewer: I see, so, may I ask for your job title, please.

Interviewee: Head of capital markets Support Services.

Interviewer: Thank you. And your age range?

Interviewee: Oh, what's my choice?

Interviewer: You don't need to give me the correct number.

Interviewee: 52.

Interviewer: Yes, so, that's it, do you think, is there anything else I haven't asked you, but you want to share it with me?

Interviewee: Yes, I guess there's more about the-- you know, we only touched upon, I suppose the local team, you know, what can be done locally for virtual teams.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: I think it's an important thing when I've seen it done well, there's a lot happening locally, like I talked about the vertical, horizontal, and I think it's-- I don't know whether this should be more focused on that horizontal, that local part to it as well, so, people feel part of a local community as well as a global team. I think there are two factors there, I think.

Interviewer: Oh, I see.

Interviewee: The people who are working in a global team remotely in India or Sri Lanka or Romania or Fort Worth, or whatever. There's a local element to that and there's a local team as well as the virtual team that they're delivering into, so, how do they gain experience from the people they've got, they're working with locally? How do they pull from their knowledge, how do they share experience, learning at the local level as well as the vertical into that global virtual team? Do you see what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes, make sure they're inclusive at the local office as well.

Interviewee: Yes, that's what I mean, there's a local office, so, you might have three people from the office in Sri Lanka working on your virtual global team, but those three people in Sri Lanka or India, whatever, are also part, they're in the office of a thousand people. What's being done for them? How are they feeling part of that local, how are they made to feel part of that as well, that's important. If it's done-- if your global management of resources is to work, I think you have to think of those local level, what you're doing for people locally as well as know it's not just about delivery into that global team, it's about that local community and knowledge share and sharing experiences and going for drinks and parties and things like that as well. That's important as well.

Interviewer: How do you make sure that happens?

Interviewee: Well, I don't, HR does, but I guess it's-- how do I-- what's my contribution? Speaking to HR, making sure people are-- making sure I'm looped into the local representatives. So, if I take Romania as an example, I might have a number of people in Romania who locally are being looked after by somebody. So, I stay in touch with that somebody, I understand what they're doing for the team and maybe that's-- you share ideas with that person who can then at that local level ensure that team is perhaps talking to another team that's local that has similar experience or shared experiences, making sure that they're being looked after, I guess, at a local level.

Interviewer: Do you have...

Interviewee: Because there's only so much you can do remotely, but a lot of it is what they can do locally as well, that gives that added value.

Interviewer: Do you have a situation where you have staff in-- for example, Romania, but then the people in that office keep asking your team member to do things?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: No? but it happened to some of my interviewees.

Interviewee: Oh, really?

Interviewer: Yes, so, he wants to-- he told me that he wants to visit the team to make sure that...

Interviewee: They're not working on other stuff?

Interviewer: Yes, because sometimes they're too polite or the people are asking them to do things are more senior to them, so, they are a bit...

Interviewee: Actually no, I take that back, so, Romanian, no, but Sri Lanka, yes. That has happened in Sri Lanka, yes, you're right, where there have been local managers who were senior, who were asking them to do that, no, you're right actually, that's true, and that's very frustrating when that happens and you have to go and speak to those other managers. And if they do have that requirement, then you get it formalized. No, that has happened actually.

Interviewer: So, do you put that in training, like tell your staff that if that happens, tell me or something, did you need to...?

Interviewee: Yes, exactly, you put in formal procedures or something like that. Or if somebody wants to ask, contact you, or to ask you to do some tasks when you're working from a queue, that queue can be prioritized, for example. And maybe what they're asking to do is perfectly valid, but they shouldn't be coming to you directly, they should be coming through the appropriate channels to get their request prioritized, just because they're local. But it's telling the people on the ground, is also going back to those people who are asking them to do it as well, making sure they follow the processes.

Interviewer: That is good to build trust, with your team member, they know that you'll always support them.

Interviewee: If you're supporting them, yes, for sure.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, so, that's all the question.

Interviewee: Sorry.

Interviewer: It's all right with you?

Interviewee: es, it's fine, it's fine.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Interview number 7

Type of interview: Video call interview

Date: 21 July 2020

Location: London

Duration: 37:46

Job title of the interviewee: Business Owner, Chief Executive Officer

Gender: Male

Age range: 30-40

Size of company: 10 people

Global virtual management experience: 3 years

Interviewer: Yeah. So basically, my research is about what makes for the successful management of a global virtual team in the London industry. Yeah. So just to start off, what does global virtual team mean to you?

Interviewee: Oh, actually that's a great question. So, I don't really make a distinction between… you can record this. Yeah. Good, great. I don't really make a distinction between a global and virtual or just a virtual team. For me, it makes absolutely no difference where team members are provided… I said two… sorry, the two differences are going to be whether or not team members have got any form of time zone overlap, such that they could engage in a personal communication either via video or via phone. So, they're the two distinctions that we always try to in terms of how [Company Name] engages employees, people, we always make sure that there is a time zone overlap.

Which is great because that's the type of relationships that we want our team members to build. So, the global virtual team is where for us, it's where we end up with a group of people coming together wherever they are that's United by a common goal, where they understand a purpose and they work jointly together to achieve that outcome.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Interviewee: That's, the definition for us for a [Garbled]. What is a global team?

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you. And just, just for your information, I'm recording the information for transcribing.

<div style="text-align: right">Commented [Author419]: Global vitual team definition</div>

Interviewee: That's fine.

Interviewer: I will not release it.

Interviewee: That's fine.

Interviewer: Yeah, you will be kept anonymous, so don't worry about it. [Name] told me that you have a lot of history working in the London FinTech industry? So may I ask you from your point of view, what are business drivers for virtual management in the London FinTech industry? The business drivers.

Interviewee: Cost. Being blunt, it's costing skills. They're the two primary drivers, is that you can now with… and COVID has proven this more than anything else. You can now find talent pretty much anything anywhere. And that covers all sorts of capabilities, everything from UI UX design, app design, web design, customer research can be conducted remotely. App and server side, build out for the creation of products. And increasingly as people become more used to working remotely the remote teams themselves then require less actual oversight and less management generally. So originally to start with this can be quite a big of a step change for people, but increasingly we're finding that this is just the new normal with coders. And so the sort of, you know, virtual teams of virtual… are just no longer really virtual teams, they're just teams. So it's what's used to start off as virtual something, just means, team members that are not physically located inside the same office. That's pretty much it. So, it's primarily been a lack of skills and costs that have been the two drivers for us.

> **Commented [Author420]:** Covid-19 as a driver

> **Commented [Author421]:** Access to global talent

> **Commented [Author422]:** Cost saving

Interviewer: And what are the key challenges that you face when you manage such a global virtual team?

Interviewee: So, the primary one is interviewing. The hard one is interviewing, and you know working out cultural fit and getting new team members to gel - sorry, I've got my hands over the camera. And getting new team members to gel. So, it's the start of introducing a new team member. That's the hard part for managing those teams. We don't really find an issue with either payments or task allocation, you know, modern tooling, like Jira and Confluence gives you all that sort of capability. Anyway.

> **Commented [Author423]:** Challenges in team building

> **Commented [Author424]:** Evaluate the effectiveness of Jira and Confluence

Interviewee: Cool, what's the next question.

Interviewer: So, did you say that the challenge you got there is recruiting and introducing new members **[unintelligible 06:19]**

Interviewee: Yeah, that's correct. So, the two services that we've used have been freelancer.com. If we're looking for contract resources that want to join our team. So, there's

several different freelancing websites that are now available that provide access to temporary resources. We haven't yet engaged permanent members or staff virtually yet. And we haven't had… so we haven't had to deal with any of those sorts of headaches or hassles that come along with permanent recruitment.

Interviewer: So, what cultural difference have you experienced with working in a virtual team like communication, workings time.

Interviewee: So different people and different cultures get the brief more easily and some are more likely to ask questions, which is really important. So, with a virtual team, the most important thing you can do is have people that if they don't understand something or if they have… or not sure about something or need additional help with something they need to ask for that help early and often. And different cultures, you know, will approach asking particularly management to help differently. So, we find that Oriental background. So Malaysian, Vietnamese, typically. Australians and Kiwis don't have a problem with asking questions. Likewise, Eastern Europeans don't typically have… if they don't understand something, they'll ask. Funny enough Ukraine, we had two people that didn't ask the brief or ask the help or ask the clarifications.

And another area is of course, India and Pakistan. So, no problem with the quality of work that's done or performed by those people or regions. But we just as conscious that there is a cultural bias in some places not to ask questions. And that's a big problem. That's a really big problem in virtual teams because you're… because you're not managing them and you're not seeing them physically, you know, day to day, hour to hour, et cetera, et cetera. You may not realize that they you know, haven't understood the brief you know on task because they have not quite understood the ask, et cetera, et cetera. So that's why you try and use some tools to keep track of velocity, keep track of task management at least in the beginning so that you can assess whether or not people have understood what they actually, you know, you want them to do and how they are going about that implementation.

Interviewer: Do you think that people are tend to not ask question is because of the cultural difference or it because the language barrier?

Interviewee: No, I haven't had any issues with languages. The language, the English has been phenomenal everywhere.

Interviewer: So it's more about culture. Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. More about culture. Which is a shame in some respects that this just, you know, culturally it's hard to overcome some of those.

Interviewer: Yeah. I can understand that because like, when I worked in Vietnam, for example, we tend to have to respect like our teacher or our senior and don't question them back or something like that. So… and at school children tend to not ask question as well. So later on when they go to work and become a part of the culture I can get that.

Interviewee: That's correct. There's also, it depends on the type of team that you're looking and the resources and skills that you're looking for. So, because [Company Name] is a small consultancy and a small business, we don't have the time or the money to specify the ask to the absolute minutiae detail. So, we either leave it up to developers or you know consultants or people to make assumptions, use their experience to make you know logical decisions and work with a high degree of autonomy. Now that means that you either need to be hiring senior people or you need to be hiring people from areas where they'll ask questions that you don't have to worry about those such you know those cultural issues.

Because we've had an issue previously where we thought something was specified, you know, good enough and potentially it wasn't, but due to cultural problems or cultural issues, we ended up wasting two weeks, worth of two man weeks because the individual just was too afraid to ask questions or ask for clarification or ask for help and assistance.

And every time they were asked, it was no, everything's fine, everything's fine, everything's fine. Meanwhile, they were panicking. You know, at that point you go one of two options. You either retrain and coach that individual, or you do… The most important thing for [Company Name] for any of the virtual teams is that autonomy, but also encouraging people to ask questions. If you don't ask questions or you're not sure you either were a genius in which case your output will show it, or you're the wrong fit for our company. Other companies, however, will spend you know specify everything to the absolute minutia detail.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: That at that… and then hand that over for, you know, delivery. But at that point I would argue that that's not really a virtual team concept or construct that's an outsourced delivery, if that makes any sense. So a virtual team is one that's supposed to all come together to collectively decide how to solve problems rather than being given a specific set of instructions to one individual to say, build this as the instruction please.

Interviewer: I got it. So what are your communication, do you have any communication problems in your virtual teams?

Interviewee: Not really, from a language point of view, no. We may have problems in terms of the specification issues. Like as you would have any way, somebody might not completely

understand the specification, but in terms of actual interpersonal communications. No, not really.

Interviewer: Yeah. And what communication tools that… do you use?

Interviewee: Pretty much every single one on the planet. So Zoom, Microsoft teams, Slack both typing and also for listening.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: In terms of project management, it's the Atlassian Stack, so Confluence, Jira, Bitbucket.

Interviewer: How about email? Do you think email convenient?

Interviewee: Not really. They've mainly due to the delays.

Interviewer: Yeah, because it's easy because overloaded or people over-tag you?

Interviewee: So well, email its increasingly people just need to ask, usually particularly in technology companies, they just to ask a short question and the… I suppose the etiquette of email is not really designed for essentially what you need is either a real time composite chat or a 30-second face to face conversation with someone.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It actually takes longer to write an email and describe the problem than it does to either pick up the phone or just send a screenshot and say, you know what… excuse my French, what the f?

Interviewer: May I ask you, what does trust, T-R-U-S-T, mean to you in your working environment?

Interviewee: Trust?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Right. So, trust us, we're an identity company, so we're a security company. So, trust means absolutely everything. That's from discretion when it comes to how our clients and the projects that are being worked on, most of them are covered under nondisclosure agreements. Integrity when it comes to things like the access that you have to our source code, as well as our customers… our customer systems. And that includes everything from intellectual property you know, holding intellectual property, as well as not disclosing or selling or trying to seek to take advantage of somebody else's intellectual property.

So, integrity is very much a part of what we would define as trust. Honesty, when it comes to billing hours worked you know, output productivity, et cetera. Whenever a virtual team… Honesty is an absolute huge important part of this. So would I say integrity, honesty and trust. These are actually [Company Name]'s company values, so that part of our core company resources, so they translate quite well to what's required for remote work is integrity, honesty. Oh, yeah. And so, transparency.

Commented [Author431]: Be honest

Commented [Author432]: Trust is a critical factor to virtual team's success

Interviewer: Yeah, so I guess it's maybe harder to build trust in virtual teams than local teams. So how do you build trust in your team?

Interviewee: So, in terms of virtual teams, we always start off with something that's usually self-contained, doesn't require a huge amount of you know, knowledge transfer upskilling or risk in terms of providing access to sensitive stuff or systems from day one. The outputs of those sort of smaller isolated deliverables are then assessed for quality, for competency, for how well that you… you know the member has joined the team and gelled with the team. And then for subsequent iterations, you end up with ever increasingly providing access or requesting remote resources to work or engage in projects that are ever more increasingly sensitive, so… And become ever more increasingly valuable from things like an IP point of view.

So, we're in a position where, because we have a system that's very kind of process for working in developing this very modular. That's built around a very, very well-defined reference architecture. We can get individuals wherever they are just working on specific modules without having to have access or engage with people or understand the entire system. And that allows those individuals that we bring on board to have a sense of ownership of the changes and I think because usually there'll be working on one component but just probably the only person working on that one component but likewise leaves us with the ability to control what access they have and then slowly grant those individuals access to more and more components, source code, intellectual property for both our systems and also our clients.

Commented [Author433]: Building trust

Interviewer: And how did you motivate your team members remotely?

Interviewee: Money. Yeah, being honest, most of the remote teams would be engaged in either freelances or not on permanent contracts therefore if the outputs aren't sufficient then they just simply don't get paid and in particularly in COVID world where there is more candidates globally and a lot more thousands upon thousands, most of those candidates are frankly motivated to keep the… to keep more work coming back to them which means it's quality of output is actually quite high. Now, in a non COVID work world where

employment you know, is the other way round where actually the workers have the most of the power.

It was genuinely a bit of a problem because as soon as something else would come up, it brought more bright and shiny or somebody paid somebody, you know, more money, virtual team members tend to have less loyalty to a company particularly at the beginning. Now a lot of [Company Name]'s teams are scattered across the UK and they're very loyal to the company and they don't… we don't… we operate now pretty much, it's highly remote workforce.

We are planning on bringing people back to the office this year, so again, I think everyone's very loyal to the company because the company has been very loyal to them in terms of keeping the jobs, managing furlough, not making any of them redundant or laying them off and that's created quite a nice symbiotic relationship and symbiotic levels of trust with our UK-based remote employees… the remote virtual teams, the truly remote virtual teams and they're never going to come and meet the rest of the organization. It tends to be the fact that they have a job and money is the primary motivation.

Commented [Author434]: Compensation

Interviewer: Yeah, true. May I ask you like, is there anything that you would do different from managing traditional co located teams? So, when you manage a virtual team is there anything different specific you had to do. Like at the start of a project or at the end of project, is there anything special that you do?

Interviewee: That's a hard one because the services and type of services that we provide the projects tend to just roll one into another and resources and reallocated the different projects, they'll be working with the same people that they've worked in previous project. So, in terms of that sort of continuity of, you know, sorry, having clear sort of start and stop line items, you know, yes, it doesn't really… it's not the same as sort of building and assembling a team and then disbanding the team and then having to rebuild the team again, we operate both product development but also consultancy, so primarily we are services slash consultancy first, which means that our resources know that they'll always pretty much be deployed on client site, so in terms of engaging with new clients and those sort of introductions, we find… the onboarding process tends to take a lot more time.

So we… instead of being able to deliver at the same pace and speed, we find things just genuinely have to be tempted slightly. So our expectation is probably the one things that have to change both in terms of how quickly we can start a project and how long it's actually going to take. So I wouldn't say we do anything really different for an on perm or remote virtual engagement because we are all the same way, we all use the same tools, we use the

same tooling ticket management into process management regardless of whether or not people are in the office or not.

Interviewer: How many years of my global virtual management experience do you have… have you heard?

Interviewee: Sorry.

Interviewer: How many years that you have experience?

Interviewee: Three, three years.

Interviewer: Three years. Did you manage a virtual team when you work at [Company Name] and other firms?

Interviewee: No, not the [Company Name] but [Company Name] and [Company Name]. Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. So from… do you see any difference between managing a virtual team is such a big firm compared to a dynamic new firm like you? Is there any difference?

Interviewee: Yeah, massive difference. Typically, in [Company Name] and a massive firm, the virtual team will have a local line management, so all of the local management, local firing, local HR, local resourcing, it's… you may have resources from say India or Pakistan or whatever but they will have their own long local line management that will have their own local objectives. So, you will pretty… in those big firms, you'll pretty much managing them as purely as technical resources for a project. In a small firm, you have to manage them for… if they're permanent for everything, you have to manage their, you know, their pension, their wellbeing, their sick pay, their leave, their personal problems and issues et cetera. So all of that HR function typically has to be performed by you locally in very large firm's terms all of that, the administration headache and burden is executed by the local function.

Interviewer: But in your firm, you had to do every… deal with those things?

Interviewee: Correct. We have to do it because we're only a small firm we'd then you know, you're not going to have a… we don't have a big outsourcing center, we have individuals.

Interviewer: Yeah. I see, do you have… I think [Name] say that you are CEO now?

Interviewee: Beg your pardon?

Interviewer: [Name] say that you are a CEO of your own company now?

Interviewee: That's right.

Interviewer: So, do you have managers working under you?

Interviewee: No, we operate a flat structure.

Interviewer: So, when do you… I just want to ask when you recruit people? Is it important that they have to have first-hand experience in working in a virtual team?

Interviewee: Pardon.

Interviewer: Is it important for you… when you recruit your team member, is it important that they have to have firsthand experience before, in working in a virtual team?

Interviewee: Again, it's not explicit requirement, its typically the managers and the team members that we hire all have experienced either working remotely or working with offshore remote resources. It's almost… it would be very surprising now for us to find anyone that doesn't already have that experience.

Interviewer: True, it's really true. May I ask you, what do you think managers need to be effective? Like in term of skills, knowledge, attitudes to go in virtual team?

Interviewee: Agile practices and very strong agile disciplines, leverage agile methodologies to be able to make sure that the team is firstly, there is a sense of team, that the team is brought together to build and deliver a function and secondly, that you end up with tasks being estimated, broken down, manage created again by that team. So, a manager's first and foremost responsibility is to ensure that the team is jelling into the team then functions and understanding how agile, unless some other practices can be used to help the tools, you know, drive the objectives which drives the team and the practices that go along with, you know, leveraging those tools, you know, we see you're doing sprint, sorry, sprint, you might be doing, you know.

Making sure the team's doing game planning, estimation, the stories that are appropriate, quality that retrospectives and sprint planning sessions, they are all followed. So, the team is bought in and that the team has a chance to make improvements to working practices or anything else that goes along with how it chooses to work. Now, that is easier on bigger projects where we are, you know, we can afford to have somebody act as a scrum master on very small projects, that's the challenge but it's something that we still try and get the team to do even if it's only two of them, just to make sure that those practices and processes and rituals are followed.

Now, those rituals help and make sure that we've got visibility of what's going on from the team but just by having those rituals that can help the team to form and gel and bond because it's always ensures that there's a coming together… processing as a coming together activities

that happens on a regular basis and that coming together is one of the aspects of being able to… or one of the things that can help correct the team.

Interviewer: And what do you think makes for the successful management of a virtual team?

Interviewee: The successful management of the virtual team is to help the team put the processes in place such as they then don't need as much management. So in terms of management of a team, it's about helping the team to manage itself and then increasingly being able to, you know, let the team run itself, so we've got quite good core team members that have used to running the practices that come along with the agile and actually those individuals no longer need management, the team needs direction but I would say that our teams don't need a huge amount of management anymore at the start of a, you know, an agile journey from a… for an organization, individuals and the team needs a lot of management.

Because you need a lot of justifications and educations and process and training and guidance to put and instill the value of the sort of practices and processes into the team. But once they're established and the team is gelling and executing these practices and processes, well, it's like an engine you know, if the engine is self-tuning at the end of every two weeks' sprint, you don't usually need to step in and rip it out and replace it or upgrade it or do anything, we'll just continue to run and every now and then you might want to do a review or change the oil or whatever but once the engine is going, it should just continue, you know, continue operating.

Interviewer: Yeah. So how… what is the key to achieve that what you are doing? How do you make sure it will go on the right direction like that?

Interviewee: It's measurable **[Unintelligible 30:22]** so, based on output so, the team is setting its own measurements for success every two weeks as part of adopting those agile principles, the team is essentially self-assessing its own and by the way, I include myself as part of the team but the team essentially self-assessing its own success against its own targets.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So, you say the target let the team go on the direction to achieve that target and they have to assess themselves.

Interviewee: And that's right and at the end of the two weeks, they will still assess themselves, how well did they do? Were they too ambitious? Did they make core estimation? Were the stories or the requirements not clear enough? And then at the end of that, they assess and they make changes and then they reassess and retry again every two weeks to constantly iterate to improve how the team functions.

Interviewer: Oh that's very clever, yeah I got it. I also… earlier you say that security is the most important thing I have but I'm just wondering how do you ensure guaranteed a security in your team? Because I just think like for example, if I create some… I create a firm and how can I know that my team member actually not work for my competitor?

Interviewee: You can't and this is why people are the hardest things to manage.

Interviewer: So how…

Interviewee: That's the hardest thing to… what you call to manage. So…

Interviewer: Hello

Interviewee: Yeah so what you're talking about is slowly making sure that the individuals are, you know, are trusted at the end of the day, given the teams are remote and the teams are quite often going to be in areas where essentially you cannot recourse or discipline or whatever. Maybe very hard to you know to apply it's exceptionally difficult, so from a security point of view, people are always going to be the biggest risk, that can be a biggest asset but they're always going to be the absolute biggest risk. And this is why I said earlier, our approach is to introduce people very slowly into the team and then give them increasingly very slowly access to competitive information.

Interviewer: I got it. Yeah, that's how you reduce that risk, isn't it?

Interviewee: Correct, we just slowly introduced them into the function, make sure that they worked and then that also limit our exposure but at the end of the day, if you have got a, you know, you can have a remote person or somebody within the organization sitting behind you that decides to try and steal everything that you've created and give it to a competitor. At that point, your only recourse is really the courts but in some of these remote jurisdictions, intellectual property is not considered to be enforceable that they've, you know, it's a challenge and there's always a risk when dealing with people, it doesn't matter if they're remote or on-prem.

Interviewer: And to conclude. So, you think that to… for the successful management of global team, so better the organization should be above performance management system that focus on outcomes rather than activities?

Interviewee: Yeah, that's correct, so that is… the whole agile methodology is to focus on the outcome rather than the activity. So yeah, if you weren't adopting or we didn't have in prior place, some well-defined agile software or project delivery capabilities then it would be very difficult to gauge the success or not of those teams but likewise, it doesn't matter if you're on perm or remote, everything should be tracked back to a output rather than just

Commented [Author442]: *Building trust*

Commented [Author443]: Building trust

activities, it doesn't matter if it's the most simplest answering the phone or being… brings somebody through the office, everybody should be trying to improve their processes and improve the way that they do that work such that… and that can always be measured as an output.

Interviewer: Thank you. So only, just a few last questions. May I ask you confirm the type of business?

Interviewee: So, we do a mixture of software development as well as IT infrastructure consultant.

Interviewer: Yeah and how many people were in your firm?

Interviewee: Just 10.

Interviewer: Yeah. And it operates from the UK, yeah okay, that's it, that's all the questions I need to ask you today. Thank you very much.

Interviewee: Perfect.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: Now you're more than welcome. Good luck with the rest of your survey. Is this for, is this for your PhD?

Interviewer: Yeah, they say for PhD, I'm not really sure how can I manage to write it up? Am trying my best, it's just the baby, just so busy with the baby.

Interviewee: Exactly.

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Interview number 8

Type of interview: Video call interview

Date: 4 August 2020

Location: London

Duration: 50:46

Job title of the interviewee: Head of UNIX

Gender: Male

Age range: 40-50

Team size: 9 people (based in West America, East America, London, Austria)

Size of company: 4,000-5000 people

Global virtual management experience: 6 years

Interviewer: How are you there though?

Interviewee: Good – thanks, yourself?

Interviewer: We are at [Name] home at the moment.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Okay let… so…

Interviewee: Okay, so just sort of there so, because this is a focus on FinTech, I will focus on my experience on the [Company Name].

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So, my answers will have a focus on that but obviously it's a general thing as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, may I ask you what does global virtual team mean to you?

Interviewee: So, a global virtual team obviously in a global team you've got aspects from all over the world and a global virtual team and the focus of the team is on working together for a common purpose and mainly using a lot of collaborative community communication technologies to facilitate their work.

Interviewer: Yeah. And you worked at [Company Name] for a long time, Isn't it? So, from the point of view, what are business drivers for virtual management in the London FinTech industry?

Interviewee: So, there's a lot of different drivers where virtual management makes sense… virtual teams make sense. So, one of the… one of the main ones is that you get access to a much larger talent pool, so rather than being limited to people that can be physically located in your location, you can tap into people that could be from all over the world. So that was a very good example and the team at [Company Name] because we were tapping into people that physically would not want to move to London, but they were happy to join the team because they knew they could work remotely. And I see remote work being quite a great carrier as well, so I think we'll have a lot more knowledge and work's coming in from that. There are also a lot of cases where there's going to be better morale within the team, so if you've got people for example, that have families to bring up, et cetera, you can be a lot more flexible around that. So, you can end up with the same people being more productive because they're just happier, which is always nice. Their days are shorter because they're not commuting so much, so you haven't got people spending hours a day on the train, there are cases where people work on the train but then they're not as productive as when they're sat at a desk where that desk is. And there's also… you know, that brings him with expenses as well, so there's a cost saving where you don't have to pay for their train tickets et cetera. And you've also got things like requiring less permanent office space so that can be a huge cost saving as well.

> **Commented [Author445]:** Access to global talent pool

> **Commented [Author446]:** Productivity

> **Commented [Author447]:** Cost saving

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: But generally the… quite a big business driver is increased in productivity as well, so particularly with Corona that's happened recently, there's a very big organization saying that they've had a huge increase in productivity within knowledge workers, so that I see as being, you know, knock-on evidence at all of the factors that I just mentioned being pretty important.

> **Commented [Author448]:** Productivity

Interviewer: Yeah. There is one issue of many… in many of my interviewees mentioned cost-saving as a business driver for Virtual Teams.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: There's a point that not clear yet, but how much do you accommodate… save up by running virtual teams instead of hiring like 100% people… local people?

Interviewee: Yeah. So, I don't know and I think before Corona, people hadn't… I haven't seen many studies around that…

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: But I think… and that's very difficult to measure as well. Because when you… unless you've switched a team from being remote – from being local to remote, or you've just taken a strategy like for example, you might've just decided to reduce your office space you know, I think the cost savings are going to be very different depending on the organization. For example, office space being a big one. If you're a company based in a cheap area, not London, your… you know, the amount that you'd realize through that would be a lot smaller than if you're in London where office space costs an absolute fortune. I think there's so many factors. It's depends on the organization and on the team. So, I think that productivity increases but you can also have… if you have a badly managed virtual team, you could have an impact to productivity. And then you're going to end up with… not with a cost saving but actually with a cost. So, you know, there's a lot that goes together.

Commented [Author449]: Cost saving

Commented [Author450]: Cost saving

Interviewer: Yeah. So just take that as your team in **[Company Name]** before as an example. So if you hire 100% local people to do the work of your team, so you can… how much that costs? the extra cost that could be

Interviewee: Well for start, we couldn't hire that team locally because they were unique individuals that only exists in… is… literally that they tried to get the skill set that we had, would have been impossible locally. So, the costs… but if we assume that they could have been sourced locally, the salaries would have been insane probably, so there's no effect on… I mean some virtual machines come back… Sorry, some virtual teams can be a cost saving because you've been able to tap into labor markets that are cheaper than your own locally.

Commented [Author451]: Access to global talent pool

Commented [Author452]: Cost saving

So, I'm not focused on that because that's not been the kinds of virtual teams that I've… that I'm talking about here. But you know, things like office space, it was relatively small team so that was okay. Productivity, these guys are pretty productive wherever, but I think that productivity is higher when they're not asked to do things they don't want to do because there were quite a strongly opinion team, so a lot of them had families and stuff as well so, you know, it's really difficult to put a number on it.

You know, the general cases, I mean it was a very specific team and the general case is very different than that. We did have costs I mean, when we had to get people for a particular project to come locally, there were a lot of travel expenses, you know but that's necessary whether you have a virtual team, you always have to get people on site at some point. So

Interviewer: Yeah.

Commented [Author453]: Further discussion about cost-saving as a business driver for global virtual teams

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So may I ask about some specific details about the virtual management arrangement…

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Part of like size of the teams and geographical spread and communication media you use.

Interviewee: Yeah so, it was a team of nine.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: It grew over time. So, eight of those people were a hundred percent remote for business as usual. I was one of those, so that was good. And then we had one guy who worked in the London office, but optionally could work remote whenever he liked. So yeah, I mean, he tends to be quite business focused so he's working quite closely with the business who were local. But when he into our meetings, it didn't really matter whether it was in the office or not so, that was up to him.

Interviewer: So where did your… where does your team… where do your team buy base from?

Interviewee: So, we had three in West America

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: With a massive time-zone difference, four in East America with a large time difference but not too big, one person in London and myself in Austria

Interviewer: May I ask you this question? You don't have to answer because when we talk about costs, so I thought… I heard from your friend about the case of [Company Name] when you live in Austria and then somehow that they… there's some tax or something like that.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, so I think that this issue has been mentioned in research a lot, because global virtual management is still relatively new.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: So is that okay to talk about that?

Interviewee: Yeah, we can do, so I'll talk about it in generic terms. So, for the most part, that is very easy to structure if your company has gotten to a legal presence under payroll in those countries already.

So quite often, particularly with larger global companies if they've already got local offices in that country that can move people to those payrolls and obviously that's something that used to be aligned with physical teams, so it's a bit of an organisational change in terms of accounting to have someone who's not a member of a physical team in that country and only member of a virtual team in that country but that's obviously just a payroll structure thing.

The challenge comes if you've got people who are more of a digital nomad or if they're permanently based in a country that they don't have a legal presence in, so that's very easy for a contractor. So, if you've got somebody who's effectively working out with their own umbrella company in that country, they can sell their services across whatever trading agreements exist and then the tax is handled locally and the duties on the trade agreement. What becomes more complex is if you've got an employee in a country where the company doesn't have a legal entity and doesn't have a payroll because if you've only got one person in that country that's going to… you know, payroll is a very expensive thing, there's a lot of overhead on that and what happened in my case was that they were paying me without tax in the UK. And then we had a manual effort with accountants happening in Austria, so effectively I had to prepay tax a quarter's at a time.

Interviewer: A quarter?

Interviewee: Yeah, and then there's exercise then to attach a tax return at the end of the year of which you should get a bit of a refund but obviously with that, there's a lot of, you know, much greater than I ever had, stress for everybody involved because it's just more complexity and accountants who aren't cheap so, you know that represents an overhead.

So, you know, that would always depend on… as a company, whether that was the right decision on whether or not that employee was valuable enough to go through that extra expenses. And they… there's also problems where if you've got a legal entity in the country, you're going to be very **au fait** with all of their laws and tax regulations et cetera, whereas if you're working in a new country, you don't have a legal entity and then any of that understanding is going to have to happen in a very custom manner.

So, you know, those sorts of things get more difficult. I think there probably will be cases… I mean, in my case, it was… moving to Austria was an incentive originally to stay with the company, so that was something that I offered. I think there will be cases in companies where people say they were going to be in one country and then they're actually doing different things and then the company ends up liable for some issues.

So that's just the case of trusted honesty and communication being key and those factors with, you know, when someone's employed that they have established the rules of

engagement what's acceptable when I remote work and tax residency et cetera, very important. So it's quite a complex issue.

Interviewer: Yeah, very complex.

Interviewee: Yeah. I think for most people, it's not… because most people stay put in one country and most remote jobs are either that you're a contractor, which is as I said, simple because you've got your own company locally and you're selling services or that you're employing people where you've got a legal entity anyway.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah, so in your case for the tax refund, isn't it tax refund?

Interviewee: Rebate

Interviewer: Rebate?

Interviewee: Or refund, rebate is kind of a more official term. Yeah rebate.

Interviewer: Did you have to pay for that or did [Company Name] pay for that?

Interviewee: I can't get into specifics around that. So there is… [Company Name] provided accountancy services but there's more specifics than that.

Interviewer: Okay. it's… may I ask you… earlier, you say that your team member has different time zone, so do you have any issues and around that organizing meeting managing the team?

Interviewee: Well, I think outside of the concept of a virtual team, you've also got you know, in a lot of global organisations and FinTech tends to be dominated by global organisations. So, people are used to collaborating with people outside of their team, so you know, whether that's business teams or whether it's other technology areas or whatever. So even if your own team is local, people are used to some of those challenges of working with people in different time zones and different cultures. However, obviously that's magnified if you've got people within your own team, your own virtual team that are over those boundaries. So, I would say that some of the… I'd say there's a lot of the problems are common between both of those scenarios, so let's say you have two local teams that have different roommates trying to calibrate and work together, they'll have the same challenges as two people within the same team but within the same team it's magnified.

So, for example setting up meetings, obviously being aware of time zones and being sympathetic to people's schedules, so not saying I'm sorry, you've got to be in a meeting at

Commented [Author455]: FinTech virtual members tend to have first-hand experience of working in remote environment.

five in the morning, will be very bad team morale and for collaboration. So those sorts of things are important but also there's the whole thing of how sort of… how you interact proactively in a… … you can have a problem where if people are not being proactive and not collaborating properly in one time zone, they will send an email and then the next person picks it up wait until the end of their working day and then sends a response and we get a whole… another day passes and then the same pattern happens, and you can end up with like, each and each exchange of information requiring an entire day in order to happen rather than being proactive. so that people are proactive in responding on times when the time zone has an overlap, you know in there for example, using chat interfaces proactively and realizing that if they're prioritizing their day and they're working with people on a time zone and they have two hours overlap but they need to prioritize that collaboration, join those two hours to avoid those issues where, you know, you have to wait an entire day for a unit of progress, so I think really can take something that should take an afternoon into something that can take two weeks pretty easily, so that can really damage productivity.

Interviewer: Yeah. So do you set any rules to your team to avoid those things?

Interviewee: Sorry

Interviewer: So do you set any rules for your team avoid those problems?

Interviewee: It's generally good working practices. So it's… there's a lot of common sense involved in those aspects. So, you know, having good people in your team who are going to manage those things proactively is good but as I say, as you know, let's say you had a junior member of the team who's just joined from university and you were telling them how to navigate it.

It would be prioritized the times when you have an overlap for both meetings and collaboration, be aware of them, be sympathetic to the other team's schedules or the other members' schedules or in the other time zone. And yeah, and just be very proactive around collaboration and how you interact during those times.

Interviewer: Yeah. Some of my interview is that they feel really annoyed when they have a meeting at 5:00 PM. They're about to meet **their work mates** they have a meeting set by a new job for example, at 5:00 PM is really frustrating.

Interviewee: It can be but then 5:00 PM, you know, you've got your early birds, so you like to get in the office when they're working locally at 7:00 AM and leave at four but there's actually a lot of people that like to start a little bit later and work a little bit later. And normally in the office, six o'clock was that pretty… was when people would normally work until.

So, you know, when we're working virtually five o'clock shouldn't be too unusual, you know, it depends on working practices I mean, five o'clock on Friday is obviously different to five o'clock on a Monday, but it just depends on working culture and if people particularly want to avoid those times and that could be equally be things like if they've got children, that can be a more difficult time. You know, if people want to avoid those times, it's just about knowing your colleagues and working with them and communicating properly.

Interviewer: So you would take those issues in a sec… when you consider setting a meeting as well, that person not your team member.

Interviewee: Yeah but you know, I mean a lot of the… a lot of the topics that we'll cover later, trust and communication and proactive feedback is really important.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So someone says I can't tell you meetings after five o'clock and it's a complete mystery and I'm not telling you why, you know, that doesn't work very well. But if they say, Hey, you know, I've got to pick up my kids and I have to be… I have to finish work and be in the car at half past four, otherwise it's a real nightmare, everyone's going to understand that and you know, then people won't be challenging them on why they're not able to.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: And it's the same, at the other end of the of the day as well in the morning and at lunch time,

Interviewer: I got it. So do you talk about trust? So what does trust mean to you in your working environment?

Interviewee: So, trust is very important. This is a concept that's important locally. I think there's a lot of concepts within managing a team and how the team runs and how the people interact that are very important when you're working locally but so much more important when you are remote.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So, trust, trust is one of them. Trust is built in lots of different ways, so it can be the way that you interact, the rapport that you have with your colleagues, so do you like them for example, can help us to trust, because that's just in the way that humans interact, if we like somebody that we tend to interact more and be more at ease when we're talking to them. But it's also… that's built out of all the communication that we have.

Commented [Author460]: Be aware of time zones and be sympathetic when setting up meetings

Commented [Author461]: *Be aware of time zones and be sympathetic when setting up meetings*

Commented [Author462]: Trust is a critical factor to virtual team's success

Commented [Author463]: Build rapport with team members

So, for example, you know, when you're working with somebody, how well do you collaborate? how well do you give feedback? You know, within colleagues, if somebody… if… whenever you work together on something, they always seem a bit grumpy but don't tell you why. You know, you're not going to trust them as much as if they come back and say, hey you know, this bit that we just worked on didn't work so well, can we figure out a way that we can do it differently together? You know, if that person just says, I don't like that and you suck, then that's not going to build trust but if they focus on working together and fixing that, what you've done now is you've established trust that the person giving feedback, trust the other person not to overreact and the person receiving feedback, trust them because they were open with them and they know that they will communicate with them and they know that they're nice to work with because if there is a problem they're going to discuss it well and openly and honestly, and honesty is one of the also principle ways that trust is built and if there's no honesty, then trust fails straight away.

But with that trust, that's the basis that all of the other things happen as well because if you lose the trust, then also the collaboration fails and the communication fails, the feedback fails and the team falls apart, so trust is really key. And you know, respect is another aspect of that builds trust. So, if you had a team member or manager who was not showing respect to their colleagues, then the trust would disappear pretty quickly. So, there's a lot of aspects, it's a very complicated emotional thing but it comes together with a lot of aspects and the whole like report and likability.

So, in all the remote teams I've worked on, we've also had a replacement for that whole conversation that people have around the traditional one is around the water cooler, you know but the… you know also in the pub because if you're working remotely you don't go to the pub together and that, you know in English culture is pretty big part of working culture.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So, it's always important to work hard on like how do you get those things? So, for example, a lot of collaboration tools, you know, you can make extra channels and for example, having an LOL channel where people can put funny pictures and not be worried about people saying well, that's not professional means that they can have a laugh and a joke about things or also moan about things that are bothering them. So, have you just seen this news article about what Bill Gates has said now, you know and people can interact as human beings and start to build friendship, professional friendships through that.

Interviewer: Yeah

Commented [Author464]: Foster transparency and accountability

Commented [Author465]: Be honest

Commented [Author466]: Trust is a critical factor to virtual team's success

Commented [Author467]: Treat employees equally, with care and respect

Commented [Author468]: *Develop informal social channels*

Interviewee: So that's also, you know, that all goes together in that coherence of the team and that also builds trust as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, did you try to build a kind of a virtual water cooler for the team?

Interviewee: Yeah, that's really important. All the virtual teams I've worked in so, obviously -, we didn't touch on collaboration tools any of that, I think you wanted to say, so you know, one of the key ones is having some kind of an instant message interface and you know, Slack is obviously a very strong one, Microsoft Teams is busy trying to take over the world and succeeding in lots of ways.

But they all allow you to create extra channels, so having a channel where you can talk rubbish with your work colleagues is actually productive. You can tell pretty soon if people are spending too much of their day on that but allowing them to have a chat like they would do over the last is and giving them a forum to do that and where there's an open amnesty on talking to your colleagues is important.

Interviewer: Yeah. So for your trust is based on the way communication and knowing each other or more based on… more likely to base on performance, because like some… there are some definition about trust, I trust my… like my colleagues, we deliver the result that people promised.

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean of course, if you ask someone to do a job

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: And they can't do it reliably, you're not going to trust them to do the job. But my answer on trust has been focused on other things because I think performance is a big topic on its own. So, if you read into scrum methodology for example and the field of project management, that has a lot about some of these concepts and so trust for example, is quite heavily represented that in the way the teams work together because it's really an important concept on the soft aspects of how the teamwork in communication function.

Interviewer: Thank you. And how do you motivate your team member remotely?

Interviewee: So, motivation - it's a good one I mean; the start of my answer is effectively… is the same as a lot of the same factors as before are important. So, all the, you know, it's just part of good management really, so there's a lot of aspects to motivation so for example, on a task-by-task basis, if you ask someone to do a job and they come back and you say "great, here's the next task", that's not very motivational. If you say, "Oh, thank you very much" that "It was a really good piece of work, I'm really pleased with the way you handled this". That's motivational because you feel like you've contributed and also making sure that

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Commented [Author469]: Evaluate the effectiveness of Slack

Commented [Author470]: Evaluate the effectiveness of Microsoft Teams

Commented [Author471]: *Develop informal social channels*

people understand where the team is achieving things as well, so they feel a part of something and that the team together is moving forward and achieving.

But it's also important to get the negative feedback as well, so someone does something and you as a manager stay quiet about it and go, here's the next task, but actually there was a problem, every time you do a piece of work, it's probably going to get worse.

So actually, I think you can underestimate the motivational impact of negative feedback because if you give some negative feedback and then that employee fixes it and then your next piece of positive feedback is, "Hey, thank you so much for dealing with that problem". And now everything's amazing and then they're going to be happy that they've fixed it, so that's really good team morale. So, a lot of things we just talked about is important. So, all the communication and making people feel happy and having like a good working culture that people feel that they are a part of something that they're all working together, that they're not on their own is really important. And that they generally as a happy place to work even if it's remote. Flexibility around working hours, so one of the keyways… one of the really good ways to ruin morale is by having stupid rules that aren't necessary and then forcing everyone to live by them. So, if someone said right, we're working remotely but everyone's got to be at their desk between eight o'clock and five o'clock no failures, and you're only allowed half an hour for lunch, then people could get pissed off with that and that's not going to impact morale. If that manager's flexible around saying what I know you've got the school run to deal with, so it's totally fine. You know and having a flexible cultural that you've got to be careful with performance, people don't take the Mickey and spend all day playing Xbox or something and not working but having that flexibility but that's also part of trust, if you as a manager trust your employees, they're going to trust you back.

So if you respect them to work and not do the time and you've got measures to understand that performance and identify if there's any issues with, you know an employee not doing that but there's another way to add morale… to improve morale, is letting people at a higher quality of life through the flexibility remote working gifts can be a huge motivator and I can speak from personal experience. I used to work American hours because the UK hours didn't make so much sense, there's a much better overlap with the Americans. So, I used to go skiing in the morning and then start work at three in the afternoon and then work till midnight, you know, and those hours make perfect sense for me but if they've said no, you're based in Europe, you have to work these stupid hours when there's no overlap with my colleagues, that would have been a de-motivational center. But then all of motivators is local as well, so things like pay, things like career progression you know, all the important things that you normally manage in people's careers are really important. So, if you as an

Commented [Author472]: Provide feedback

Commented [Author473]: Flexibility in working hours

organization, you're saying, are you a remote worker? So, we're going to pay you less, that would suck. That would not motivate people at all. So, people need just as local workers, remote workers need to see that they have that career progression both in, you know, in achievement and position so that they've got opportunities to move up through the company as well.

Interviewer: I'm sorry one minute, I think the baby crying.

Interviewee: Oh

Interviewer: Let me take him out

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, say hello to James. So, we can continue.

Interviewee: Yeah. So, I think I've pretty much come to the end there as well but you can… you get the feeling of what I'm saying? You know, all the same, career progression is normal but you've got to be a lot hotter on it because it's easier to forget it when you're remote but then there are some specific things that are important to remote as well.

Interviewer: So could you do… could you consider yourself a transformational leader or transactional leader?

Interviewee: Transformational leader?

Interviewer: Yeah transformational leader like when you motivate your follower to be the next to perform beyond what is better of them, to be more focus on motivating people and develop new opportunity for staff

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah, while transactional is more about like they consider the relationship between them and subordinates is like a process of exchange so they can follow a compliance by either offering rewards or threatening punishment.

Interviewee: So by offering rules or threatening punishment?

Interviewer: Yeah. Offering rewards or threatening punishment.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think it's more important with people to motivate them and give them opportunity to do well.

Interviewer: So you transformational?

Interviewee: Yeah. So the thing is, I mean as a leader, you've got to provide the opportunities by which they can do that.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So, it's very important as an employee, if you want to succeed, to think of yourself as an entity that you need to promote and market and find opportunities and be opportunistic as an employee, but as a leader, you can mentor them through that and provide stewardship and suggest opportunities and create opportunities for them that they might not find themselves.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: And that's when someone's fighting your cause, that's also motivational because they know that you're behind them, so that's also going to motivate them to work, to be more engaged with the team and with you and to work harder and work better and be more productive.

Interviewer: Yeah. And based on your observation, do you think the virtual managers that you know

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: They're more likely to be transformational or transactional? side would work better?

Interviewee: I think definitely what I just mentioned. So yeah, I it'd be very easy with a negative management style to really de-motivate your team remotely. So, you know, if you had someone with a carrot or stick approach to management but they're all going to the pub every… the end of the day and having a laugh together that might work okay for some industries in some environments but remotely, you know, you've really got to do a very good job as, you know, having a very positive and very good approach to management.

Interviewer: Yeah. I asked the same question to a CTO and he say that the best way to motivation? Money, especially during…

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: This Pandemic.

Interviewee: But, I mean, it's one of the things I mentioned, you know all the same motivations as local, so pay people more, they're going to be happy but it's not the only one and you can pay people a lot of money and they're still going to be miserable if they hate their job and they hate their colleagues.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So, it really goes hand in hand with a lot of things, you know, the work as well, you know, if you're giving people work that they enjoy, they like doing it, if you give people horrible jobs, they hate. But if you call on someone and say right, this is the person who has to do all the shit jobs in the team and they always get horrible job, they're going to be de-motivated and leave and other people in the team are going to not like that. So, it's important that everyone enjoys what they do.

Interviewer: Yeah. So can I focus on two more questions?

Interviewee: Yeah of course.

Interviewer: So one is, can you list out for me some recommendation of effective virtual team leadership?

Interviewee: Yeah, so I would say it's kind of repeating some of the things I've mentioned already but focusing on all aspects of good management is important. So, there's obviously a much broader topic there than just virtual management but you know, that's obviously really important. And as I said before, if you do a bad job of that, it's going to be magnified tenfold if you're remote, so you've got to be very good at that. Having a structure and a routine for the team is important. So, for example, establishing like a cadence around having daily meetings or maybe that's too often, maybe two meetings a week or one meeting a week can be important, it just depends on the nature of the team. But that can really help them, help people feel that they have a sense of belonging that they're motivated, that they've also got a forum to talk about things that they might forget to bring up otherwise but that's really important for cohesion. Establishing a good working culture, that's fun!

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: And has a lot of trust involved is really important. So, you know, as a leader, you should be the shining example of that and you know, make sure that people enjoy what they're doing and how they're doing it. Encouraging collaboration and again, showing being a very good example of that. People sometimes are a little bit shy and they, you know, don't want to say things in front of the group. Maybe they want to say one-to-one, you know, so they'll come off the team channel and go onto a one-to-one messenger instead of, you know, but just focusing on good practice around collaboration that, you know, you want everyone to work together or chat together on a group… as a group rather than starting offside conversations. Obviously, that's important sometimes but you know, that's a good practice because sometimes people will volunteer ideas that you hadn't thought about and it keeps everyone, I think there's a lot of what people would say and being very proactive with feedback. So, providing praise and thanks when it has gone well and being constructive

Commented [Author480]: *Get the right work to the right person*

Commented [Author481]: Standard management skills, magnified impacts

Commented [Author482]: *Cultivate a culture of open communication*

Commented [Author483]: Develop informal social channels

Commented [Author484]: Get the right work for the right person

Commented [Author485]: Define an agenda for all calls

when things don't go well is really quite key and again, that being very good at career management is a really important thing.

Interviewer: Yeah, is there anything I should know better about provide feedback because I can provide feedback to a virtual team member could be very different from provide feedback for a co-located.

Interviewee: Do you mean, how do you do it?

Interviewer: Yeah, how you do it. Is there any… people should pay attention or that should be careful.

Interviewee: So, there's lots of bad ways to provide feedback, like telling someone they've done a bad job in front of the whole team on a call or on a group channel. The thing that you miss though when you're remote is, for example, if you've just given your boss a piece of work and they don't look happy, you might proactively say, oh sorry, you know, is there something wrong with us?

And then they've got the opportunity to redo it. When you're remote, you miss that human interaction sometimes. So, it means that everybody's got to be more proactive, so on the side of the manager, they've got to be proactive in saying that something was good or bad. You can't just smile and say thank you. You know? And so, if you give someone a piece of work in the office and they say yes, that's great, thank you very much, you know, with the same words on, you know, on a chat might not come across it as with the same enthusiasm. So, you know, that's important but just you know, if there was like a really big problem, you know, not just writing the machete message but actually saying, Hey, have you got a second to get on a call? You know, that can be really important because with a tone of people's voice, you get the verbal communication, okay not as quite the same as body language but at least you can tell the tone of someone's voice and that can really help with those sorts of things, so.

Interviewer: And yeah and do something like ongoing feedback during the…

Interviewer: Yeah. So, there's also… I'd put feedback in three different categories. You've got sort of real-time feedback which has constantly between managers and employees but also between team members, you know, that has to be happening all the time. So not just between the manager but within the members of the team, you can have your appraisals from HR where maybe it's quarterly. But if you've waited, if there's a general not necessarily task specific but if there's a message that you want to give somebody, that's more of a general thing. If you wait until the HR side, that can be pretty much too late. So, having regular one to one with people can be really important as well. So, they're not necessarily like a formal,

Commented [Author486]: Provide feedback

Commented [Author487]: *Lack of the visual or auditory cues*

Commented [Author488]: Provide feedback

Commented [Author489]: *Lack of the visual or auditory cues*
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let's write down all of our objectives and outcomes and having like a regular one to one with people maybe every two weeks can be really important.

Interviewer: Do you have no problem when you explain to your team member about the plans or about feedback?

Interviewee: About?

Interviewer: Yeah when you discuss with your team member about the team plans or things like that language or people don't understand or something like that at all?

Interviewee: Are there any language barrier issues?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So that really depends on the team and where people are from and also whether you've got local clusters of people in the team.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So, let's take the example of a… rather than a virtual team, that a separate team working in different locations.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: That's an extreme example. So, let's say for example, you've got an office in London, an office in Italy and an office in maybe you're doing some offshoring to India somewhere. You've got very different cultures under very different languages. So, you can have issues where people are having little side meetings at the meeting room or you can obviously use where people feel that it's easier to talk about an issue locally rather than in front of the whole group or you can also have cultural differences, so in some cultures, they want to… if there's a problem, they give you a polished amazing solution … amazing products but they're not going to want to say where the problems are.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So, then that means then that if you experienced the problem more, it gets worse, and they've told you it's fixed.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: That creates more problems, and it gets worse. So, you know cultures where it's a lot more open and you'll say, "Hey, there is this horrible problem and we're working on it", you know work a lot better but just culturally, you know, there can be differences there. So, if we compare that to virtual teams, obviously the hope would be that within your virtual team, your team members are closer than in separate teams.

But you can have the cases where let's say you had five team members from one country and five team members from another. People are sometimes more comfortable talking about something that's difficult in their local language, so that can create divisions within a team. But generally, you know, within a team, you should have a good enough culture to resolve that and also when you encourage everybody to collaborate on things, then the important bits are resolved.

Commented [Author492]: The language issues

So since I've worked in teams where we've got a large amount of German speakers and a lot of people that aren't from Germany and so their working language is English but if you get on a conference call at the start, they'll switch to English and it's halfway through the conference call, they'll all be in German.

Commented [Author493]: The languate issues

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So you've got to be proactive in saying, Hey, can we switch to English? And they're all completely fine with it but if you didn't and you just let that continue, then you could be feeling that you are alienated from the team and so you could be a little bit brave. And the other thing with language barrier is if you don't understand something, it's really important that you feel that you can say, I didn't understand that without feeling embarrassed and without feeling you're going to offend the person that's speaking

Commented [Author494]: The language issues

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: So that it can come down to team cohesion, rapport between team members, trust between team members et cetera. So, things are really cool.

Commented [Author495]: The language issues

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Is there anything you think that I haven't asked but important?

Interviewee: We've covered lots of ground; I mean I've given a quite broad answers as well. There are other aspects, so there's all the sort of environmental stuff… what people's working environment, so like… so for example, if you said, Hey, go ahead and work remotely but they had an absolutely horrible environment for that and that didn't have adjustable blinds and had really bad lighting and you know, they could end up ruining their vision in a year and then they're less effective because they can't see but they're also going to have a, you know, that's going to have an impact on their life as well so, it's important that you look after people's wellbeing and their working environments and provide support to employees. So, give them the equipment they need and all the rest of it.

Commented [Author496]: Home office

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Those sides are important but they tend to be with most of the workers I've known, they tend to just look after that themselves. But I think it's important that's asked their environmental wellbeing after as well

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: All the health and safety stuff.

Interviewer: Yeah, so did your company support you for… give you any support about that issue to create…

Interviewee: Most companies say when companies have got an official remote working capability, they generally do. Where it's more of an ad hoc thing, they can be quite bad at it, but they can represent quite a big rest of the company because if the employee feels like they've had to work in this environment and then they've got a bad back or something, there could be legal implications for the company. So, it tends to be important that the companies demonstrate to have done their due diligence and assessing or at least providing the opportunities for the employee to work in a safe environment.

Commented [Author497]: Home office

Interviewer: Yeah. So, yeah. So that's it. How many years of experience that you have in managing global teams?

Interviewee: Probably about six I think, in terms of deeply being intubated into a global team. I've worked on projects for much longer than that, that have included members of the project team that's are… have their own home team locally, which are in different geographically separated environments. I'd say that overtime collaboration tools are improving - has really had a very positive effects on that and the amount of remote working that goes on now has had a big positive effect on the tools that are available for more traditional work between local offices as well.

Interviewer: Yeah. Thank you very much. Do you have to go to work now?

Interviewee: I'm a… I've booked this hour off so, another 10 minutes.

Interviewer: Okay, because I still have a one question.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: One topic is about anything different from managing a traditional team and a virtual team. I know most opinion we already cover but thinking that you're going to share with me like, how do you feel different managing a traditional co-locating team and a virtual team? What could be the…

Interviewer: Again, it's a thing I touched on earlier but it's a matter of focusing priority around certain things. So, if you're imagining a local team for example, the instant messaging chat would be less important.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: But also, the consequences of bad management are much higher in a virtual team. So, there are places where you can be sloppy on the way that you lead a team in a local environment that you get away with, whereas in a virtual team, the team performance and your performance as a manager and you know, will be massively impacted if you don't run that team well, you can be saved from that if you've got bright competent team members who love what they're doing then, you know but typically, the general cases that impact of bad management will be much higher virtually I think.

> Commented [Author498]: Standard management skills, magnified impacts

Interviewer: I see. Yeah, so basically you covered quite well on the topic because I interviewed so far, you are eighth person.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewee: So, the previous person already covered most of the questionnaires. I just… so I today… I asked you some deeper question on the issue that I haven't been cleared yet.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah thank you very much.

Interviewee: I said, hopefully it went well and I hope I didn't talk too much.

Interviewer: No, that's not the case. Thank you very much. Oh by the way, I heard that in Austria, they have the new policy that very beneficial for employees, they pay 20%... 80% of salary. So, you too, you do less work or something rather.

Interviewee: It's a little bit like the furlough scheme in the UK.

Interviewer: Ah, it's the same.

Interviewee: So, when work is a furloughed, so it's very similar so, the concept is that you as an employer, you want to… with Corona hitting your business may have been impacted, so you might not be able afford to keep your employees

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: But that will impact when you… when Corona gets better and your business picks up, you want to get those same people back. So, the concept is that you as a government pay for a large percentage of their salary but then they only have to work… either they don't work or they just have to work a couple of hours a week. So the Austrian scheme was that

you had to work 10% of your hours I think it was, which equates to basically going to a meeting a week and then you would get paid 80% of your salary of which the government would basically give to your employer so that your employer would then pay you through the payroll but it's only up to a certain amount. So, for example, for me it would be much less than 80%. However, some companies are very nice, so our company was saying, we'll top it up to 80% for you, so you can still pay your mortgages. So that's… they're not obligated to do that but that's what they were going to do. And I nearly got for… I nearly went on that but a new product started just at the wrong moment and I… so I stayed working so business as usual.

Interviewer: So you cannot see as much as you want?

Interviewee: Well, I can't say it's all at the moment. We take a glacier of the other week, so can we stop the recording now? We're sort of just chatting.

Interviewer: Yeah, I was just thinking about that. Yeah.

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Answers to follow-up questions:

Question: Is it possible to estimate how much does your company save up by running virtual teams compared to hiring 100% local people? (If not, please explain why.)

Answer: I can't put a number on this because cost wasn't the reason that the team was remote (more due to locality of uniquely skilled resources) and I didn't directly see the numbers for things like office space, because it was never allocated.

> **Commented [Author499]:** Cost saving

Question: Would you consider yourself as a transactional leader or transformational leader? Please explain. From your point of views, transformational or transactional leadership is more effective in virtual teams? Please explain why and how, if possible.

Answer: I would consider myself to be transformational. Aspects of transactional leadership are important, such as a clear understanding of expectations and provision of feedback, whether positive or negative. However, it's far more effective as part of an overall transformational approach, where team members feel part of something that they are empowered to contribute towards and that they are constantly growing in their career to make ever more exciting opportunities accessible. Part of good leadership is creating those opportunities and mentoring team members to realise their potential.

> **Commented [Author500]:** Leadership style

Question: With the Covid-19, many global virtual team members are currently working from home instead from their offices as before. Do you think home-based global virtual teams will be common in the long run, post Covid-19?

Answer: Corvid-19 has caused a huge spike in home working and it is inevitable that we see office working increase gradually as restrictions are lifted and when an effective vaccine becomes available. However, many industries have learnt through Covid19 that remote working is incredibly productive, which will have a direct long-term effect on attitudes and policies. I think we'll see more 100% remote work jobs, increases in regular (sometimes contracted) work from home days and increases in flexibility and attitudes towards ad-hoc work from home days.

> **Commented [Author501]:** The growing trend of global virtual teams that work from home

Question: From your point of view, what are the support policies and management practices companies need to provide global virtual team members who work from home to enhance their performance? (i.e. creating home office, work-related tools, gym workout, health and safety, flexibility, childcare, team-building activities, etc…)

Answer: Support policies/management practices post Covid19 are very similar to building any remote team, hence my answers in the interview apply. Specific comments on aspects mentioned in the question:

- Creating home office: Important to any remote team

> **Commented [Author502]:** Home office

- Work-related tools: Important to teams whether remote or onsite, but especially important to remote

> **Commented [Author503]:** Technology

- Gym workout: Any benefits such as Gym membership subsidy shouldn't vary whether onsite or remote

> **Commented [Author504]:** Health and safety

- Health and safety: The employer should do a level of due diligence to ensure that the employee is working in an appropriate environment, however a great deal of responsibility is that of the employee - may want to sign something acknowledging this

> **Commented [Author505]:** Healthy and safety

- Flexibility: Important in any environment within reason and when not to the detriment of the work, but one of the advantages of remote. Important not to create unnecessary restraints as flexibility can be a huge boost to morale or dramatically reduce morale and engagement if the employee feels that inflexibility wasn't justified

- Childcare: Same for any working environment
- Team-building activities: Important to any working environment, but especially to virtual teams. Frequency of onsite meetings/team building outside work depends on geographic location of team.

Interview number 9

Type of interview: Video call interview

Date: 13 August 2020

Location: London

Duration: 50:58

Job title of the interviewee: Release Manager

Gender: Male

Age range: 40-50

Team size: 200 people (based in Oslo (Norway), Fort Mill (US), Sri Lanka, Russia, China, different regions in Italy, and different locations in England))

Size of company: 4,000-5000 people

Global virtual management experience: 10 years

Interviewer: So, my first question is what is a global virtual team to you?

Interviewee: It is working with people around the globe virtually, so not face to face through various technology communications.

Interviewer: Okay. And…

Interviewee: Yeah, that's what it means to me.

Interviewer: Yeah. And from your point of view, what are the business drivers for virtual management in London FinTech industry?

Interviewee: Right. My phone is just telling me I'm about to run out of battery one second. Another technological update required here. So I mean, obviously I work at [Company Name], so you obviously know… put the phone back in the cup. So, we take advantage of global teams, I guess for kind of… for multiple reasons really. Obviously, the most important one is, one of the most obvious ones is cost. Historically, teams in different locations have been cheaper than in London.

And so, we've got teams all over the world in Sri-Lanka, Russia, Italy, America, et cetera. So, cost is a big factor, support models in terms of sort of follow-the-sun. So, you can provide 24/7 support, so that's one of the advantages. And also, from a resiliency perspective, for us at the stock exchange this year, I think for a lot of financial institutions, it's kind of pushed forward by the FCA [Financial Conduct Authority], but there's a large kind of resiliency

push that's the current buzzword, everyone's looking at resilience, how you can kind of recover from a failure, but the part of that is around the resourcing.

So, the fact that you've got your staff in different geographical location has given you that kind of comfort factor. If there's a… you go back to last year or maybe 2018, I heard there was these fire in California, which took out a lot of the kind of American infrastructure. If you've got resources in different places around the world, then you've got cover. So, whatever's happening if you've got multiple support teams in different locations, you should be able to handle that. So, that's, that's my interpretation.

Commented [Author510]: Reducing external environment-related risks

Interviewer: Yeah. May I ask you because many of my interviewees, they talk about cost saving, but not many people can answer the question. Like how much do your company save up by learning virtual teams, instead of having 100% local people.

Interviewee: I mean; our cheapest resources are our Sri-Lankan colleagues. I don't know the close to the numbers while that might be, but it is a considerable cost difference. I mean, if I was put my finger in the air, you probably look at about a quarter of the cost potentially. So that's yeah, that's my kind of guess. So, I've never kind of looked at someone's salary in Sri-Lanka, but the kind of noise and kind of feed-back and seeing it is considerably cheaper.

That's not always the drive, I've recruited for a couple of positions. So, there's a couple of people in Romania who worked for me. So, you think, Oh, that'll be cheaper. But when you kind of start looking at the numbers and you see their rates and you see their employment laws and things, they've got around overtime, et cetera, sometimes it's an illusion really.

So, if we talk about Romanian employment law if you do more than your quota of hours a week, then automatically you get double time for instance, now that's Romanian law. So, whilst on paper, you might be able to get a resource for, you know, 10, 20 grands cheaper in Romania than London. When you factor in the amount of overtime they might be doing, which is kind of considered normal in London, then the cost starts going up.

Commented [Author511]: Further discussion about cost saving as a business driver for global virtual teams

And there can be other kinds of challenges, I guess, this isn't around virtual communications, but it's about employment laws as well. Romania, again this is the prime example, because I've got people working in there. They can't do more than 35 hours a week overtime, sort of a week, a month over time. So, you've got to take into [account] kind of different legislation factors that might be kind of local to that location.

Commented [Author512]: Challenges in employment law and practices

Interviewer: So, when did you – With your global team like that. Did you get training for those local law employment law or you figure it out yourself?

Interviewee: I guess it was kind of… you kind of find out as you go along the recruitment process, really. I'm not sure if it was ever kind of called out to me. I mean, for us again at [Company Name] we opened the Romanian data center about two years ago and we very quickly, we've got 200 people already working from there. So, we had a good HR team who knew that we were new to it in terms of recruiting people in Romania.

So, they were kind of quite quick and quite open in terms of presenting that information. But as you work with global teams, I guess from a management perspective, you do need to be aware of what the laws are and how that might impact the support models when people can work and how much overtime, they can do that sort of thing. So, it's not just a financial consideration. You could kind of take that on board as well.

Interviewer: So, you are given those information before you deal with them or

Interviewee: I can't remember when I got that information, if I'm honest. It would have been probably partway through. Yeah, I mean, ideally yes, it should be something that's upfront. I don't think they are trying to pull the wool over our eyes in terms of, yes, let's get some people recruited in Romania and then I'll let us them in on all the laws.

> **Commented [Author513]:** Be aware of local employment law

Interviewer: Yeah, I see.

Interviewee: So, yeah. And then as well, I think when your next question… one of your questions coming up is around culture as well. That's something to consider we'll get onto that in due course.

Interviewer: Yeah. Can I ask you how much increase in performance do you gain from running virtual teams? Is that…

Interviewee: Increase in performance? So, I guess you talking about as opposed to working with six people in the same office. Increase in performance, I don't see it as an increase in performance. I think you'd get the same amount of work done if you sat around a table within the same six people. I think the question is kind of, is it harder really to kind of work with people virtually? That's how… so to answer your question specifically, I don't think there's a performance gain in working globally.

Not if you're all kind of working in the same time zone at the same time. Arguably, there could be a performance gain if, for example, you're on a development project and maybe if you were doing a 24 seven or follow-the-sun model, then when you shut off in London, you hand over to another team and they work for the night and you pick it up again. So, depending on, yeah, depending on the definition of performance, I guess if you want to get something done quickly and you can kind of daisy-chain that support model or that develop

model, then you could get something done quicker. Is that better than having twice as many people working a nine to five in London? It depends what you want really. So, yeah.

Commented [Author514]: Producitivity

Interviewer: **[unintelligible 07:54]** your priority of the business as well.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, I guess. May I ask you how many people working in the team at the moment?

Interviewee: In my team currently I've got two.

Interviewer: Yeah, two?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: And...

Interviewee: But I have run projects with over 200 people on. So, I don't know which example you want to use is better. So, my role, my day job is release manager. That's pretty much the job I've been doing since [Name] left, but I have been running DR Exercises. So, DR being disaster recovery. We've run events across the whole of our [Company Name] capital markets, as well as other business areas, which is [Company Name] where we've simulated losing our primary data center. So [Company Location] basically. We've basically run tests where we've done a disaster recovery exercise where we fell across all our technology, everything from telephony to websites to the training systems.

We've managed events where we've performed that with over 200 people involved. Some of them are based in in [Head Office Location] and the office there around a room but basically everyone else was working virtually in different countries and different offices. Some of them at home on the same activity. So my day job, I had to have two people in my team, but when I'm running a project, which is a DR Exercise. Yeah I've had… I had over 200 people kind of working together as part of an initiative.

Interviewer: Yeah. Where do they base from? The 200 people.

Interviewee: So, in that particular event, which we've done about three now. You've got Sri Lanka, you've got Russia, you've got Italy. Its different regions in Italy. America, Fort Mill, London people working in different locations remotely in England. I was trying to think. Oslo, Norway has been people working on Norway in the same event. So yeah, every kind of arm of -and China, I think there's been some in China people as well.

Commented [Author515]: Managing geographically dispersed team members through various collaborative communication technologies

So yeah. What we basically did was every kind of bit of technology that was hosted in [Office Location] in London, it was filled across to its alternate data center. So anyone who

used those systems or would that'd be business end users or technological people they were involved in that activity. I think it was about 200, 220 people in total. Because we've actually got the stats because the tooling that we used, you can actually see how many people got involved. And that was one of the things that we can look to afterwards.

Interviewer: I see. Do you experience any cultural difference in working in a virtual team?

Interviewee: I think as you go back, when we kind of started working with Sri-Lankan colleagues, it was obviously quite notable. I mean, you get cultural differences. I mean, whatever that's a different country or that's a different area in England. You know, we'll say that our Russian colleagues, for example, you know, they are work horses and that's kind of their culture and their mentalities, you know, you ask them to work a Sunday. Yeah. People huff and puff in England, but you know, if it needs to be done, then the work at the Sri Lankans are very kind of very much yes, people don't like to kind of disappoint.

So yes, of course there are cultural differences. The more we work with each other, I think we kind of understand what the expectations are. You know, we don't want to say yes, we can do something when clearly we can't. We try and educate that if you think… if you're being asked to do something that's not achievable, that doesn't mean just do your best possible, it means no. Tell someone that's not a sufficient time and in order to do it properly, then you need more time. So yes, there are cultural differences. But we do try and level that out really. And that's… the longer you work with each other, I think that kind of levels out really.

I mean, in some ways it's beneficial, you know, we kind of with different characters with different, I mean it's not just cultural, it's just personalities as well, right? It's different people in different wherever they'd be geographically located somewhere different or whether it's just someone with different star sign or a different geographical region, you know, whatever people you've got, you kind of end up working together on the common goal. So, you kind of need to make sure that everyone's in alignment with their working practices and, and how that comes together.

Interviewer: Sure. And talk about communication. Do you have any difficult problem with issues with working with people with different languages?

Interviewee: Not really. I mean, I'm obviously lucky that English is a language of choice. So, I don't have any difficulty. Sometimes I end up talking very quickly. So, I've personally, I've got to slow down so people can understand what I'm saying, but that's just me. Yeah, I mean a bit… yeah, a bit more so I'd say it's sometimes the technology that lets us down sometimes. So, obviously in the current climate everyone's working remotely.

So, people's telephone lines in Sri Lanka might not be as good as talking to someone in England. So, we've been using various different video links, you know, Skype teams, Cisco lines. So, people sometimes go from working over, having a connection on their laptops, going to their mobile. That seems to be more of a challenge than a kind of dictation or kind of language barrier.

Commented [Author519]: Technology breakdown

Interviewer: So, did you have any way to like, you know, like sometimes you talk about a plan and a projects, but now lots of information and there may be some misunderstanding, or people miss the information. Do you have any way to avoid those things?

Interviewee: So is there miscommunication around statements of work? One thing we do tend to do, is make sure we have it written down. So, whilst people might be on a conference call and you ask their input, they say, yeah, that sounds about right. You don't know, if they've been listing. So, it is always good to kind of have minutes from a meeting and allow people to kind of come back on that, maybe if someone didn't understand what you were saying or the proposal you're putting forward by physically writing that down. And then again, this doesn't matter wherever you're kind of geographically based somewhere else or sat next to someone else, you know, they might have been looking at their phone or something whilst you some important meeting point. So, writing it down afterwards, save on kind of review it. That's kind of what we do. If you wanted to take that one step further, then you could ask someone to just reply to that email to say yes, that's my understanding.

Commented [Author520]: Meeting minutes

Interviewer: Oh, I see. So, after the interim, the meeting, you make a note and send it to all the members of the meeting.

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, not for every meeting, but if it's obviously a key milestone or key objectives, then you would minute that meeting and send it around to the recipients. So, you get that clarification on what was discussed, what was agreed. And also, anyone who wasn't part of that meeting can catch up as well.

Commented [Author521]: Meeting minutes

Interviewer: Yeah, going through my interviews, I learned a few texts from my interviewees. Like some people they say… some people will say that they will let the team at the firm, that before the meeting everybody will have to seek out and read the documents in a firm to make sure that they know what they are talking about. And some people say writing down to chop down the white board idea. So make sure everybody had the same follow things that they are saying.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Something like that, yeah. I think, yeah, but make sure before talking about the same thing is important, isn't it? Because…

Interviewee: So, in the office we screen-share, so who is kind of presenting or hosting the meeting or we'll be working through a document, so yeah, you are kind of sharing on the screen what you're going through. We just had an upgrade on our MS. Teams installation. So, we have got things like whiteboards. We're not really using them yet. But it's something we can use. I'm not sure if you've got any kind of tooling questions coming up, but I can talk about tooling. Do we do that now or is that more appropriate under a different question?

Interviewer: Yeah. Can you talk to me about that?

Interviewee: So, we use MS Teams, we use Skype, we use Confluence to track readiness. So as a release manager, we… what we're basically doing is lining up resources. We're lining up people's runbooks so list of things they needed to do for activities and the way we'll capture that is in confluence and using rag (Red/Amber/Green) statuses. So, it is collaborations phase. So, we're capturing requirements on there. We get an owner for each task and then we'll capture that, you know, Red, Amber, Green in terms of its readiness. Now the implementation plans that we run, they've changed somewhat since [Name] was in the company, we used to talk cut-over but it's basically a website which allows tasks to be assigned to peoples that have durations and they have dependencies. So, when we're planning these kinds of activities, we have over 200 people on them.

We build these runbooks up, which you can slice and dice in terms of how you view, what you're interested in. You might be interested in what's happening to a certain system or what's happening… What are my resources doing? What are they doing at a certain time? What thing… what tasks do we need to be completed to reach a certain milestone or go no go decision point. So we build all that information into this runbook which is… which can be viewed in a kind of a list format in terms of the tasks you need to do and who's assigned to that task, but you can also view it in what's called a node map. So, it's a bit like a kind of backflow document or process flow documents. You can see all the kind of dependencies that are required to kind of in order to do my task there's three other things that need to happen first.

So, it's very good at maintaining the control, making things done in the right order. Similarly, you put the timeline in of how long your task would take. And what that means is, if someone is down the line in terms of what they're doing, they get an idea of the timeline that their activities will be come up and then they can action them. And as that plan is put into flight, and that runs on a particular weekend or for a particular activity, those timelines are adjusting real time.

So, if someone's done a work little bit quicker, then their time will shift up. If there's a delay, something was supposed to take 10 minutes, they hit an issue. It took two hours. Their time is going to be pushed down. And with this tooling, when you were assigned a task, what I mean is when your task becomes start able. And by that, I mean, is dependencies being met. It works in such a way that you get an email notification or text message notification. So, you know, you know that you can do your work.

So, with this, with this software, you can view the plan to see what's coming up. You actually get a notification when you're up and ready. And you can also… because it's website based, you can carry around in your pocket, because you can look at it on your phone. So, if your DBA [Database Administrator] is got a task to run was 12 o'clock, you can keep an eye on that. And see, I was a little bit later, she can kind of get down the park or something, play with the kids. Now you've got a bit more time before you have to go back into that. She'd do that task.

So that's what we've been using for a couple of years now. And it's really enabled us to do kind of very complex activities, which would otherwise have to have as [Name] will remember old school kind of Excel plans, where you've got a plan manager running around with a notepad or a shared website which tried to do this, but wasn't very good at it. So this gives kind of complete throughout transparency to the people doing the work, but then also management. We get a CEO's looking at this kind of seeing where we are in terms of projects which can be seen as a good or bad thing.

It means complete transparency in terms of what we're doing, but they can see how things are progressing and exactly what we're doing. And we can build dashboards and things from it, which we've done. So, during a Disaster Recovery Fail over, they're interested in what systems we can fail over within the essay time. So, we can build a pie chart up there saying, right, these systems are starting to fail across and you can start… it starts ticking them off for the pie chart starts filling in.

As they're completed, you get the estimated timelines. You know what time you've kind of started the clock in terms of fail over and you can see what the estimate time are for getting them finished as well, because you know what tasks are coming up. So if you could see something's potentially slipping behind where it should be to meet a regulatory requirement, you might go and put more resources on that to try and get it done quicker. So it's a great collaboration tool to kind of help with that.

Interviewer: It so powerful

Interviewee: Yeah. Simple concepts, but powerful. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. So why nobody told me about this before,

Interviewee: It's a fairly new product actually. They've been open as a company for about three or four years. I think they've only got 13 clients. They're very big in… might say very big financial services. That's the kind of market at the moment. But yeah, I've been working with them. I'm on their board of people who recommend improvements, the product, et cetera. They basically came out of Barclays, I think a spinoff, but they said it's a really good product.

And all the people that have used it recently - certainly all the new people joining our company at the moment really kind of come in and say, wow, this is you know a really good product. This is, you know, very, very strong as it encourages collaboration, it's got transparency of where we are. So yeah, really good tool. And If you want to set up a session with them, I can put you in contact with them. So yeah.

Interviewer: Understanding could be a sensitive question, but if there any chance you can screen shot it a bit for me, so you can cut out sensitive information. I just want to see graph or something like that. So it happened…

Interviewee: I can probably do something. Yeah, I mean, yes, to answer that. I have to think about how to do it. I will get something sent across. It would be good to look on their website. If you look at www.cutover.com there's going to be some videos and information on there as well. So, take a look at that. I mean, that will give you some really good examples, but I can certainly help it's because there's a very vast amount of information there, I'm not sure how much I'd kind of capture the screenshot.

Because we have these node maps, we've over a thousand tasks on there. So there's basically you get a little circle for each task and they've got lines coming off them linking to all the other tasks that they're associated to. And it's very interactive. So you can click on that task to see what dependencies is quite informative and that sort of thing. But I'll… go to their website. See what you can find there. And if you want, I can put you in contact with them to get some more information on that. They'd be more than happy to help. They're a nice friendly bunch.

> **Commented [Author522]:** Review the use of technical enablers for global virtual teams

Interviewer: Yeah. Thank you very much. I have looked at them. May I ask you the next question is about multi... about trust. So what does trust mean to you in the work environment

Interviewee: Trust? Our [Company Name] motto, "my word is my bond". I mean, saying it, I mean, say you're going to do something, you kind of do it. And having the trust and confidence in the resources that are working on something so that they won't drop the ball essentially. I mean myself again, for example, we're release managers. So, in essence, you

> **Commented [Author523]:** Create a team motto

know, the counter market's trading systems are putting their hands on the weekends. We take those systems and we're in charge of upgrading them - making sure that the tests that need to run on them do so as much as possible.

We go into a timeframe and commonly the way we work; we roll those systems back. If it's not a go live weekend, we'll roll them back ready for live service. So, we need to have faith and trust in our teams that… well the most important thing is that we put the system back and we don't break it. So we don't want to break the systems for live service Monday. So, you need to trust in the people that if they see an issue that they report it regardless of whether it's something they've done by accident or not. You know, if something's been broken, we need to understand why and we need to make sure that we've got actions in there to fix it essentially. So, you need that trust in people to be open and honest because the worst thing you want is to break the live server system. So, trust is a big thing at [Company Name]. And if you made a mistake and you try to keep it under wraps and that's worse than breaking it and telling someone and they're being kind of repercussions, you need to be open and honest about what you're doing.

Interviewer: It's difficult, isn't it? I think it's a very basic instinct that we going to cover up and we tried to fix it before we have to show it for other people.

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, you got to kind of judge it by what it is. I mean, yes. I mean, it is good to… if you're reporting a problem, maybe you want to consider what the solution is beforehand. We've got this issue, but I think we can do this rather than we've got this issue. So, you've got to think about the timeline of when you reveal that information. Going back to, you know, a live service, not just a kind of weekend change, if you've got an issue in service, you've implemented a change on a weekday, it's broken something.

Now, if you know that you've done that and you've caused that mistake, if you're in live service, then all of a sudden, you're going to get a lot of people looking at trying to find the cause of that failure. So, you need to be open honest, right from the get-go. Otherwise, you're going to waste a lot of people's time. They might be going off on wild goose chases. So, you put your hand up and then you fix it. You've got to own up to it. So that's why you need trust.

Interviewer: Got you. And how did you motivate your team member remotely?

Interviewee: How do we motivate them? Same as non-remotely.

Interviewer: So for not remotely, you can go out with them for beer after work.

Interviewee: Are you talking about how do you maintain a social interaction when you're not in the same country as them? Well, it's good to do these kind of face-to-face catch ups.

We've been doing some of them within the company again. So I mean, there's various things you can do is just kind of using it and maybe using what's there on your laptop. My sister in law's office, she works for [Company].

They got Craig David in to do a DJ sets and live streamed it to everyone in the office. So, they could have a little DJ set with Craig David.

do online gaming nights where they do things. I had a comedian come in again, all over the laptops everyone was working from home for COVID. At [Company Name] today, I've just signed up for a… Oh, have I lost you. You still there?

Interviewer: Yeah. I can still hear you, but I cannot see you.

Interviewee: Okay. It looks like someone's trying to phone me. Okay, I'll keep talking.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Am back. Yeah, so today [Company Name] kind of wellness email came out

But so there's lots of, you know, making the best of what you can. But for the motivational perspective, yeah, face to face constant communication, they need people kind of alone. With my team, I spend half a day on the phone with them anyway because we're all in meetings together. We have to collaborate in terms of what we're doing. Yeah, so that's how we motivate really. Obviously, financial motivation is maintained through overtime and that sort of thing.

Interviewer: I just remember when I studied human resource at Kings college, and then I shared with my professor that in Vietnam, we usually have a treat. Go on holiday together, like the whole…

Commented [Author527]: Online competition (quiz) and events

Commented [Author528]: Online competition (quiz) and events

Commented [Author529]: Online fitness boot camp

Commented [Author530]: Communication overload

Commented [Author531]: Compensation

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: The whole department together go for a treat together that the professor asked me. Do people feel annoyed about that. Like you have to go to work and then you have to have Holiday with your colleagues. Is it annoying? Do they get paid for that?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So basically collaborative culture, you know, so it's a bit different here. So may I ask you…

Interviewee: And so on that point, our Sri Lankan colleagues do that quite a lot. They go away with their… they take their families like they have a good culture with that, you know, that I will speak to them and they say, Oh, can you put it in change schedule that no one's available in this weekend and off they'll go, they'll go to the beach and stay in cabins with all their families. So, they do that. Again, in Romania they have away days where they go to, go and get pin balling and all that sort of thing and they'll do it together.

I'm not sure whether that's in work time or whether that's on weekends. Oh, in fact, no. I mean, so yeah, I mean things like ski trips in London, as I think you'll probably know there's a bunch of people which go on ski trips, which is quite nice. I mean, some of these are a company instigated. In fact, I've been up and off playing football around Europe, paid for by work as part of [Company Name] football competitions. So, I've been to Frankfurt and Madrid where we have [Company Name] football competitions.

Where the [Company Name] is playing [Company Name] and know we kind of get together and it's a work paid for event. So yeah, there's those things which we're doing physically. And with those sorts of things, it has enabled us to kind of collaborate with people who we previously would have only kind of met virtually. So, in that instance, when I played football, we had a team which was basically the London and Milan team. So, all our colleagues in Milan who we speak to on the phone we actually kind of got to meet them and, you know, play football with them and have dinner with them. And, and that sort of thing over the course of the event.

Interviewer: I'm sure [Name] never played football.

Interviewee: No, no. [Name] never played football.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 33:28] wanted to have a daughter. So he goes [unintelligible 33:30]. So may I ask you, you can say that yourself as transformational leader or transactional leader. So transactional leader basically, it's like carrot and the stick. So you use a good and a punishment to get your subordinate finished their work. Why

Commented [Author532]: Difference in the way people socialise and build relationships

Commented [Author533]: Off-line events

transformational leaders, they motivate their followers to perform beyond what is expected from them.

Interviewee: I don't tend to have a problem with people not working. I'm trying to think how to provide a good answer. Yeah, I mean, in terms of direct reportees, I've had my reportees since the beginning of the year and they're both good. I've not had to motivate them by punishment nor a reward either to be honest. So I can't really answer that one at the moment. I don't think.

Interviewer: Yeah. So this transformation leader asks you changing beliefs and value of team members increasing and broadening follows interests, gaining commitment to go and mission of the group and motivate people to go beyond the same interests for the general benefits of a team. While transactional leaders view the relationship between them and they follow us as a process of exchange. So which side you are? Transactional or transformation?

Interviewee: So I'm not really following. Can you read that again? Can you read that again?

Interviewer: Basically, so transformational leaders, they are still changing beliefs and values of team member and motivate people to go beyond their self-interest for the general benefit of the team.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: And transactional leaders, they build relationship between them and their followers as a process of the change and they gain followers compliance by either offering bagels or tightening punishments. So, which side are you going for?

Interviewee: Well, I think I'm not sure if it's actually kind of clean divide personally. But maybe the first one,

> **Commented [Author534]:** Leadership style

Interviewer: Which is transformational.

Interviewee: Yeah. I mean, we talk about aligning people's objectives with the kind of the bigger organization. So when we do objectives and things like that then we will make sure that the objectives we're putting in align to the larger group objectives. And so where we can, you know, the local objectives of the resource will help achieve a bigger goal of the organization. So in that sense, it's a bit of a carrot because if you do your objectives, then you know, when you come to your end of your appraisal, then you will come out as very good you did all your objectives and that helps organization.

> **Commented [Author535]:** *Align individual goals to organisational goals*

So that's probably the only kind of commentary I've got on that. As I say, I've not had to tarnish anyone must be because I'm a good recruiter and I've got good people (laughs). Yeah. I mean, if it did come to punishment, yeah. I don't know really what the best method is. It's

not kind of… I have to research it really. I mean, you really kind of want the people who are working for you to kind of see what's required. You don't need to push them. But yeah, the way it would be through objectives and if they were kind of dropping off then if you have to kind of push them on, then what we would probably do is kind of make sure you've got more regular kind of catch-up sessions. Yeah, if you didn't think they're performing, you might have a, you know, weekly or biweekly. Okay, what have you done? What are your next steps? Just kind of trying to keep pushing them forward. You know. Or they might come back and say, I've got stuck because I was waiting for so and so. You say okay, well, let me escalate that, let me get them to help you. So you take away those blockers. But you kind of want to enable them to kind of do the best they can really. And if it's apparent, then that it's because they're being lazy, then obviously you might want to start taking action and kind of speaking to HR, but ultimately you want to avoid those sorts of people working for you. If they're not happy, then there's probably a reason for it, whether that's a work reason or not, you know, you will try and overcome that. So that they become happy. I mean, ultimately you don't want someone working for you, if they're not happy doing the job they're doing. There's going to be troughs and peaks in terms of workload occasionally, I guess. So people are going to get pretty miserable when you're asking them to work a load of weekends. So as long as that's rewarded with overtime or, you know, not just time off in lieu, but some other reward. And that could be something as simple as saying, thank you, you know. It's common noted on our calls and we've got people working a lot of overtime, you know, no one ever said, thank you. So I always make sure I say, thank you.

And I'm always putting senior management says, you know, if they're not saying, thank you, then just give him a bit of a nudge to say, you know, make sure you give a shout out to these guys because they've gone above and beyond. They could very easily say, no, I'm not, you know, I've already worked 60 hours this week. I'm not going to work another weekend. So even that kind of mentioned gratitude, then, you know, it does make people feel better. And so I'm going on now. I've found a few more points. So if there's a reason someone's not happy, it's because they're not happy with a process or with how something's being managed.

You need to sit down and look at that with that person and see if you come to the same conclusion, if it's a valid point, then let's helped them get through it. I mean, if it's an organizational issue, then let's address that. Don't brush it off, they might have some good ideas. I might be a bigger issue than you think it is. So kind of working together on that and if you can't resolve it immediately, then you commit to, okay, we can't do it right now because we need to get this project finished whatever but you know, you make a commitment that it gets flagged and it gets picked up afterwards.

Commented [Author536]: Monitor and provide feedback

Commented [Author537]: Provide feedback

Commented [Author538]: Provide feedback

Commented [Author539]: Recognition

Commented [Author540]: Provide feedback

Interviewer: So I think you're more transformational. Because…

Interviewee: Am I? okay.

Interviewer: Okay, let tell you the draft - I am not writing about.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: No, I am writing that I'm quoting from people, from other researchers. But if you're interested I can share with you.

Interviewee: Yeah, why not.

Interviewer: Yeah. So may I ask you, what do you think next for the successful management of global virtual team

Interviewee: What's next? I think well certainly COVID has brought out – ahs heavily increased the pace in which everyone is remote working. The feedback I'm getting from [Company Name] is, I don't see people going back in the office doing a nine to five or nine to five. I think there'll be it be more the norm to work remotely than to work in the office as restrictions are lifted. So, it's a massive space. I mean, I think the technology behind it, you know, I'd never even heard of Zoom for example, before COVID, so there's a lot of opportunities for companies you know, new players, like Zoom, Teams, Skype to kind of put some new stuff together.

You know, we've talked about whiteboards that they're introducing in Teams. And so I think, yeah, it'd be interesting to kind of see what, what comes out of that, but any kind of collaborative tools is helpful. We'll certainly be using it more. I think companies… right at the beginning of the whole working from home thing, you know, when we were turning off all sorts of things basically to give us the bandwidth in the offices, I think a lot of the offices have kind of ramped up the capabilities and the throughput that you can get for remote working.

You've got a lot of reliance on your infrastructure, on Citrix, for example, those sort of things, whether that's windows 365. So I don't know, it's certainly given it an impetus. It will just kind of… I guess, kind of slowly grow. I mean, I've been doing online gaming, you know, not kind of video games, but you know, board games and things like that, which is quite fun with your friends.

So that'd be a lot more people working remotely. Older generation was never kind of into that. Mostly younger generation appreciated it. You could you know, there are older generation guys in the office, they've... they never had laptops at home. Yeah. They went to the office and then do the work, but now they're kind of tapped in, they've caught up with

<div style="float:right; border:1px solid #6ba3d6; background:#dbeaf7; padding:4px;">
Commented [Author541]: The growing trend of global virtual teams that work from home
</div>

<div style="float:right; border:1px solid #6ba3d6; background:#dbeaf7; padding:4px;">
Commented [Author542]: Opportunities for new remote work technologies
</div>

the kids per say. So yeah, but it's just going to carry on. I think people will continue making improvements for the better. Yeah. What other feedback have you been getting to that question? Is it they don't come up with any kind of…

Interviewer: It depends, people usually come up or come back with recommendations. About how to make the successful management of a global team. Like you might get us an idea because I interview people that are around you a lot. And [Name].

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, you might get an idea about what we say. It's just, I have one question. How many years of global virtual management experience have you had?

Interviewee: Oh, I don't know. I've been with the company 16, 17 years.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: Back at the beginning, everything was managed in London. So, I mean it… yeah. Management experience per say, where I've been responsible for reportees, is only a year. But then I've been working with people remotely a lot longer than that. So [Garbled] 10 years, if not more. Potentially, especially with some of our Italian colleagues. So we used to run the Italian trading systems is on our platform. We… Johannesburg, we used to run, we used to talk to those guys. So for over a decade I had been talking to people remotely and managing projects that they're working on.

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you. And the last question, what do you think managers need to be effective in this area? Like skills, knowledge, attitudes.

Interviewee: Similar ones that you'd have in the office? I don't think it changes from a global perspective. Good communication skills, obviously being clear when you're talking, if you've got different people, you know English isn't their primary language. You need to be using tooling that you can see what people are doing and you don't have to chase anyone. You don't spin around your chair and seeing what one of your colleagues is working at.

As long as you've got a working method where it's easy to see where you are, the project, what someone's doing, how they've progressed something down the pipeline, as long as you've got that visibility, then you don't need to kind of have someone sat next to you. So I mean, organizational skill is obviously the key aspect to that. Not only for what you're doing yourself, but you've developed that process. You can see that from other people.

Interviewer: Yeah, I see.

Interviewee: Yeah. And being understanding, working globally remotely means that you're working with people in different time zones. And especially during COVID you got people

working from home who might have babies are six months old or might have kids who are seven years old who need homeschooling. So, it's being kind of supportive of that and working with them to make sure that they have got everything they need. And if they've got problems, then you can work around that. I mean, I understand people in our company who, who work… who's got a day job and as has their partner and normally their kid will be in school or in childcare.

Now, whenever I got locked down, it meant that that particular couple they had to kind of work in shifts around where they could work and who's doing the childcare. So that needed the company to be supportive of that. What that meant working different hours or even reduced hours and, in some cases, yeah, that had to be supported. So that's, I guess that's a COVID related kind of concept, but it is kind of around kind of working remotely cause that's kind of been enforced by the pandemic.

Commented [Author547]: Support childcare

Interviewer: Yeah. Thank you. So that's it.

Interviewee: Is it?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Did I pass?

Interviewer: Did I pass? Can I ask the question?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah, you passed. Yeah.

Interviewer: Thank you. So, I will send you the leadership, inspired leadership. I am writing about that, if you are interested in reading it.

Interviewee: Sure.

--- END OF RECORDING ---

Type of interview: Video call interview

Date:11 September 2020

Location: London

Duration: 00:59:30

Job title of the interviewee: Marketing Manager EMEA

Gender: Female

Age range: 40-50

Team size: 40 people (based in Europe, Middle East and Africa)

Size of company: over 8000 people

Interviewer: Thank you very much. So, my first question is what does global virtual team mean to you?

Interviewee: So, what global virtual team means to me, it's basically a setup when you have part of your team based across various locations. Like, it doesn't really matter whether they are, but if they still operate as one team and it's one unit, so that's what it means to me.

> **Commented [Author548]:** Managing geographically dispersed team members

Interviewer: Yeah. And from your point of view, what are business driver for virtual management?

Interviewee: I think it's a number, from my point of view, I think it gives you the ability and flexibility to have access to the best talent. So, you are not limited to the… let's say, territorial boundaries. So actually, while looking for recruiting people, you open it up. I think having this flexibility of people and now obviously we all work from home. I actually think it's probably gives you some cost efficiencies, you're not paying for all the office space, or the overheads related to this. So, there is an element of that. I think this is the two big ones I would say.

> **Commented [Author549]:** Access to global talent pool

> **Commented [Author550]:** Cost saving

Interviewer: Yeah, some people say about cost savings. I have like, for example, one of my interviewees say that instead of hiring one person in the UK and they have to pay 60 grand a year, then they can hire people in Sri Lanka for much less money?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think where I'm at… there is an element of that. Yes. But I think it depends on the function, because I think if it's something which is more processes and, you

know, operational admin stuff, then yes, of course you can, and I'm not part of (that's not) my kind of area, but I'm sure our company, we have **[unintelligible 02:29]** offices in Philippines and, you know, India, etc.

So, you know, I'm sure we have the sort of looking at people in more cost-effective territories, let's put it this way. But for me, when it talks about flexibility, it's also, you know, like it's almost like to get the best talent.

Interviewer: It's more about the best talent?

Interviewee: Yeah. The best skill and the best talent. And I think that was the cost reduction as well as if you don't have to pay for office space and all of the overheads that are related to this because, you know, office desk doesn't come just as a salary of a person, it's actually has everything else on top of it. I don't know the numbers, but I can imagine it's quite a lot, so.

Interviewer: I see, may I ask you, what does trust mean to you in the working environment?

Interviewee: What's what means to me, sorry?

Interviewer: I don't know why, anytime I pronounce this word, nobody gets it. Trust?

Interviewee: Trust?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Okay, trust. Oh, don't worry. I did speak with an accent so it's okay. What trust means to me? See trust is a complicated, I think, well, I think trust is a very important, but you need to build trust, and I think probably having, you know, like being in a position that your relationship is over distance is harder to build this trust, as opposed to when you had meetings face to face, you know, you have in the office, you can have a chat over coffee, etc.

I think trust is absolutely important, because without trust, it's very difficult in my view to build an effective team, but to build it over, let's say, when you don't have the sort of physical contact, I think what you need to do, I think you have to create… you need to incorporate sort of activities.

I don't know, maybe online video, call meetings that have the personal element exists, it's not just all about project, it's also, you know, like we have been doing Quiz Trivia, which basically, you know, like every Friday, it would be a call with some quiz on a video, you know, like on teams, and it's an app called Kahoot, which is really good actually.

Commented [Author551]: Cost saving

Commented [Author552]: Access to global talent pool

Commented [Author553]: Cost saving

Commented [Author554]: Trust: a journey over time

Commented [Author555]: It is harder to build trust in virtual teams

So, you kind of quiz and then you have leaders, and everyone has a glass of wine and 'cheers', and so I think this is important. And I think also as a manager, you just have to put time to speak to your team one to one, ask about their personal life, you know, in obviously the right way, so that you start building this relationship.

And I also think you need to manage effectively so you don't micromanage, but also don't not manage, depends on the person, but I think in a way you don't know what people is doing, you can see it. So, you have to kind of put the tasks and the objectives in the way it's a delivery and you know, that this is what they're doing.

Interviewer: Oh, I see. Yeah. And yeah, yesterday I read an article appear on my email about abusive micromanagement.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: But how do you avoid that and how… because I think it could be a bit hard to judge someone that work quite far away from…?

Interviewee: I think for me there are two things, I think, micromanaging, personally, I think it's one of the traces of a character. So, I think there are people who are naturally or instinctively micromanagers, because they don't want to release control. And there are people who are probably more open let say, I think it's a very strong management development, no, management skill development program within an organization. I think that's one of their skills that you know, like when people are promoted along the line.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think this should be one of the skills that is looked at as is, and is developed – there are tools which, you know, performance management, how you delegate, how you assess your team, depending on where they are, etc. So, I think in some sense it needs to be developed. And I think it's something as well, maybe it's employees, I think it depends on the company's culture, but I think employees should be in a position to say and raise their feedback and concerns, if they're micromanaged, you know what I mean?

They can say, look, don't micromanage me or have this sort of discussion, saying, I don't need this level of micromanagement, but it's very hard, because people are… it all depends on the culture, on personality of the manager, hierarchical companies, etc.

Interviewer: Some culture is not open about that, some culture **[unintelligible 08:30]** ...

Interviewee: Yeah, I think, but I also think it depends on the… for me micromanagement is a manager's responsibility, it's a lack of skill and manager or lack of abilities. It's not an

employee, unless employee is not performing, but it's a different story. Then you have to do performance management on him or her.

Interviewer: Yeah. Would you consider yourself as a transactional or transformational leader?

Interviewee: You know, this is a very interesting question and I didn't really understand. I think I want to be a transformational leader, but to being realistic, I think because of the nature of the situation and what we do, I'm probably more of a transactional now, because you just need to make the project happen, you know?

And you need to make sure that the team is operating at the best ability under the circumstances. But of course, my aspiration is to become a transformational leader. But I think probably more transactional, to be honest.

Interviewer: As a manager, do you need to deliver results isn't it?

Interviewee: Yes. And you know, the last six months since COVID happened, it's been really… the environment is very pressurized, because of the… obviously there is an economic impact on all industries. There's also, you know, because the change in lock-down happened so quickly and I have a team, she is based in Spain, my direct report. She's in Spain, and she was in there for three months, nearly, absolute lockdown [due to 2020 COVID-19 pandemic] in a one-bedroom flat in Madrid and she only could go once a week or twice a week to the shop, which was on the opposite road. So, when a person is, you know, like when everyone is such a changed environment and sort of so much pressure.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's a psychological stress. It's nothing to do with anyone's job. It's more about just the whole thing changed, it was hard, because you need to motivate the team to perform to the best abilities so you had - but I did put lots of efforts in making sure I talked to her and checking how she's feeling, etc. You have to be very flexible in a way.

Interviewer: How do you communicate with your team member remotely?

Interviewee: How did you communicate with your team remotely? We definitely have regular, like weekly one to ones on video. So, I have weekly one to ones. We use Teams a lot, absolutely loves this app. I think it's very good, Microsoft Teams.

Interviewer: Microsoft Teams?

Interviewee: Yeah. I think they are very good. Do you know, it's almost like, I think it's how our one-to-one is structured, and it's also probably the fact that she knows that whenever there is a challenge, she can always reach out to me. But I think it's probably how our catch

Commented [Author560]: *Develop transparent process and system to prevent micromanagement*

Commented [Author561]: Transactional leader

Commented [Author562]: Virtual team members need more altruistic trust and affective bond trust from their managers

Commented [Author563]: Regular team meeting

Commented [Author564]: *Evaluate the effectiveness of Microsoft Teams*

up or our one-to-one, so very regular, but one-to-one, I don't mean, you know, it's not like an official, how do you say it? It's not like, you know, and of course, a review, our one to one is just basically a weekly catch-up.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: But I also make sure that I'm very lucky, because my director, she's very ambitious and she's very, you know, she's a keen learner, etc. So, I'm make sure that I also always pay attention to her career and personal development, which I think it kind of builds trust as well. So, it's not just all about, you know, projects and deliverables. There is always an element of a part of our calls, which we talk about in certain scenes, our skills, development, etc.

Interviewer: I see, I talked to some people and they do one to one, quite a lot in virtual teams as well, and they think it's really important to be **[unintelligible 13:19]** and most people also say that it's not always about work, instead, how you are doing things then?

Interviewee: Yeah. Because as I said, that's what builds your relationship, which then builds up this trust and what you have.

Interviewer: I see; may I ask about conflict in virtual teams?

Interviewee: What?

Interviewer: How does it likely to happen and how do you face it?

Interviewee: It is an interesting one, I think for me, it's very possible in any relationships. I think because a lot of the communication happens on emails, for example, sometimes emails may be misunderstood. So, for me, so you can receive, you know, like the email can be written in a way that it kind of creates an issue, for example.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: And then if you think about it, if there are people who don't know each other very well and don't understands their personalities and they come from different cultures, the email can come across as rude when it's actually okay for this culture. So there are… and you know, like even when you have calls, you know, like if you have like 9, 10 calls a day, that's what I usually have, people sometimes switch off or, you know, as they say things which may be not a hundred percent you know, like fitting or the same time sometimes, how do you say it's better?

Well, sometimes they don't say what they should be saying, you know what I mean? So, because obviously you don't see people, what we are trying to do, we definitely introduced videos. So most of our calls are obviously video, and initially there was resistance, because

Commented [Author565]: One-to-one meeting

Commented [Author566]: *Build rapport and support team members*

Commented [Author567]: *Difference in email communication styles*

Commented [Author568]: Involves excessive and formal communication

people felt very conscious. Now it's second nature, it doesn't matter, which I think helps, because you can see person and you can see the impression, expression, you know, you can see **[unintelligible 15:38]**.

So it's harder to be… let's say, in a conflict mode, if it happens, I think it's probably to pick it up early and to clear the issue pretty head-on and straight away in a constructive way, because the challenge with conflict is, you know, like if you have a face to face conflict, you kind of, you know, like you can then go like half an hour later and talk to a person. In virtual teams, you obviously don't have this understanding what the person is feeling and what they really think.

So again, I think it's an ability of the manager to pick it up quickly and deal with this pretty much straight on, but I know, because I'm quite perceptive. I can see if my team is not, you know, something is not right. I can pick up on this and I straight away ask, is everything okay or what the issue is or who?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: You know, but I think, again, it's a manager's ability to, a, probably preempt it, you know, like when you manage the situation upfront and, b, to resolve it straight away.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: So, it doesn't become a fire. I mean, it's just a little bit of a spark.

Interviewer: I see. I talked to manager in this field as well, but just before I choose the topic to do and at that time, there wasn't COVID-19, we didn't know it happened, and he also say that video should be a must because without video, it's easier for you to throw the language or throw bad things that you should not say to other people because you don't see them.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You don't feel clearly how it hurts people often?

Interviewee: Yes. It's true. It's much harder to do it with looking at camera and say, no, you know, you are somebody or….

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I mean I'm lucky – in our company - touch wood - it's not very… and in my team, you know, we don't have such that of aggressive individuals, let's say this way, but even though, there are some team members who are more outspoken and, you know, and I must admit, when we had calls with no video, it was coming across much harsher. Now with me all on the video and the person, first of all, these standards seem to be more soften their

argument. They still don't agree for example or get frustration, but it's not as, it's softer, you know what I mean? It doesn't come across as so aggressive.

Interviewer: Yeah. I see. And also, if you say something that feel is wrong, at least you just see the reaction of the other person and you can correct it.

Interviewee: Yes, definitely. So, we use video a lot.

Interviewer: Yeah. may I ask, what do you think managers need to be effective in this area? Like skills, knowledge, attitudes?

Interviewee: To be effective as a virtual manager? I think it's probably requires a little bit… I wouldn't say a different skill set, but I think you needs to have… I think it's a lot of soft skills that you need to have.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Because you need to be able to build relationships in the, let's say less traditional way or natural way. So, you need to have an ability to kind of…, you need to make an effort and find time to have these one-to-ones, to have video calls, etc. It is an extra, I do think managing virtual teams is more workload for managers, because I think you need to put in an extra kind of effort. And I think it takes more time.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Then, you know, like if you had an office and you can just have 15 minutes, you just grab somebody and say, okay, we need to have a chat. In virtual teams, you need to set up a call and you need to find the schedule, you know, it's kind of…

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think it's a different environment. So, I think it does require more from manager. I think it's soft skills for you, you can build this relationship over a video call or conference call and yeah, I think that's probably the two big ones, in addition to all the other set managers have, and you know, we touched base on micromanaging. I do think it's important if you have a virtual team to have a very good way of delegating or of giving tasks, objectives, delegating, and also kind of knowing how the performances, because they said you can't see what the team are doing. They might be by the beach. You know what I mean? But at the same time, if they might be, but if they're delivering, it's fine.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: So, I think it's a combination of – probably of the three.

Commented [Author571]: *Turn video on during conference calls*

Commented [Author572]: Management competencies

Commented [Author573]: *Involves excessive and formal communication*

Commented [Author574]: Develop transparent process and system to prevent micromanagement

Interviewer: Yeah. Thank you. So, we move back to… there's a question about multi-tasking during virtual meetings, because that I know that is quite often that during virtual meeting people mute their phone, we're not speaking and carry on side-conversation and things. So, what do you think are the positive or negative effect updates, you think?

Interviewee: I think, yes, I do think that people are absolutely multi-tasking and it's annoying because I can say to you in my company, not my team, but other team, like sales team, for example, sometimes we have calls, like big calls, you know, with all the other like guys, and you can have people who don't mute themselves and have side conversations, which is annoying, I actually find it annoying. I didn't like it. I think the challenge is, from my point of view, when you're multi-tasking, it's basically useless, it doesn't make any sense, because you're not doing one thing good or the other thing well, you know, nothing is properly done, your brain can't do this, saying that, when you have 10 conference calls a day, it's physically impossible not to multi-task because you are, you know, otherwise you wouldn't have anything done.

> **Commented [TH575]:** Participant disfavours multi-tasking

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And I think that's probably where most struggle.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think the most important is to have a very structured call. For me, the goal has to be as short as possible. It has to have an agenda. It has to come with, you know, like if you send an invite, there an agenda in the invite.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's objective of the call, that's what we need, that was you need to prepare, everyone turns up on time, that's another thing that I think is really… I didn't know about other company, but I think it's probably everywhere. You know, there is the culture of being late for conference calls. I personally find it really frustrating. I always start my call on time. I never wait for people. I just think, well, you know, it's everyone's time.

> **Commented [Author576]:** *Set out a clear structure and stick to it*

> **Commented [Author577]:** *Addressing the culture of being late for conference calls*

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: For me, if everyone turns on time, there is an agenda with clear understanding of clarity, what we are doing this called for.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Everyone sticks to the agenda. And if there is another kind of, you know, sometimes you have this sort of discussion, you can say, okay, we continue this discussion, but then we have another call for other points or we take it another call - you know, offline.

And then we still continue with what we planned. And I think if we do this, it will be less cold, and people will stay focused.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Because in a way, by making everything important, we create this basically multi-tasking inefficiency, you know? And I think that's where probably one of the biggest struggles is, because there is, I think it's probably also a consequence of a virtual management, because you don't have access to people all the time.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's almost like having calls to just let you know, like to almost overcompensate for this, I think, but one thing that help is video, because when you on the video, you can't really multi-task as much. Well, you still can, but not as much, because people can see that you are not listening.

Interviewer: So, to avoid this, you ask everybody to turn the video on?

Interviewee: To turn the video on and to have a call as short as possible, and have clear agenda, and the objective of the call. So, it's absolutely clarity.

Interviewer: Yeah. So, three key factors and what about this… there's a guy who shared with me one tape from his company, it's quite useful I think, like at the beginning of the interview, the beginning of the meeting, they spent like 5, 10 minutes. They leave documents for people, ask people to sit together and read it. So everybody has to be clear about what…

Interviewee: It is a good idea, yeah, it is a very good idea.

Interviewer: And he said maximum interview is only 20 minutes… meetings are on a maximum of 20 minutes.

Interviewee: Yes, absolutely. I have calls sometimes that are one and a half, two hours. So how can you be effective when you sit for two hours? Yes. It's very hard, and I think it's actually a very good idea. I totally agree with this person, for me calls shouldn't be normal longer than 30 minutes. You can discuss most of the points if everyone stays on track, because you know, like people also depends on different people, but they take… sometimes they go completely different tangent and it's like, okay, so important, but it's not about this call, let's stick on track.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think it shouldn't be, you know, like from HR perspective or training and development, it should be… from my view is, there should be a skill that all the employees

should be taught how to do an effective online meeting or an online call, you know, because you know, like in face to face, people come in and they're like, [mimics chattering sounds] everything, you know, and I think yeah, multi-tasking is not good.

Interviewer: Yeah, absolutely. And may I ask you, what have you experienced with working with people in different languages, are all in English?

Interviewee: Yeah. I have a lot of experiences is throughout all my career. I'm nonnative myself, Belarussian. So English is my second language. I'm a linguist by education, so I do understand languages and its subjects, it's interest in for me. And then throughout all my career, I actually worked with international teams, and you've seen from, you know, my usual, it's mostly, you know, U.S. and then EMEA, which would be Middle-East you know, Europe, all of Europe, etc. I think it creates… let's put it this way. I think it can create a challenge in the ways that as I said before, different cultures have different style of communication.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So it does sometimes create a misunderstanding, you know, for example, if you look at email style, it creates misunderstanding, because for example, I worked with Israeli teams, you know, and initially I thought that their style of the emails is very aggressive, but then when we met and we had to chat, I did ask them and I said, well, you know, your emails come across as really rude. They said like, well, no, it's how we are, it's how we write. I didn't know that, since then, it's absolutely fine.

I don't feel that it comes across as rude, you know what I mean? It's just concise to the point, it's no, but then, you know, if you received such an email from an English person, you will be like, Oh, something is not right. So, I think it's understanding this cultural difference, you know, style of communication. I do think that it depends also… language is important.

And I think what is important is to make sure that people who are employed within the company have a certain level of English or whatever language, the company chooses as the main language, because I do think, if somebody is not as, you know, if their competency or language competency is not the same level, it creates issues, because they don't understand. But they don't want to be asking questions, because they don't want to show that they don't understand.

They know they don't understand, but then it makes them feel more insecure, so they don't ask questions, and then as a result, the issues pile up and it's very important, and again, as a manager, if you know that somebody is not a hundred percent, you know, like understanding or doesn't guess it, I think you needs to… how do I say the expression… you need to qualify

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Commented [Author580]: Provide training courses for online meeting skills
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Commented [Author581]: The impact of culture on interpretation
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Commented [Author582]: *Difference in email communication styles*
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Commented [Author583]: Make sure that the candidates are comfortable speaking the primary business language of the company that employs them.
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and confirm, and I ask question, I say, do you understand what we mean? Or are you sure, it doesn't feel like you're very clear.

So, can you explain, what's your understanding? So that you reconfirm that they understand, and I think it's not my area, you know, Asia Pacific, but I do think that APAC, you know, APAC area, I never worked with APAC, but I do think it's even harder because they think, you know, like Europe, middle East, they think, it's probably… what's the expression? I think the language is probably easier in the way, but APAC is a very different set of languages, and I do think that sometimes it's even harder.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think it's my view, but I never worked with APAC, so I might be wrong.

Interviewer: I don't know, but like me and [Name], we lived together for a long time for years, but now sometime, we still have miscommunication and…

Interviewee: Yes. I am Belarussian. And you know, I've been in UK 17 years now, and yes, I've been with English guys for a long time and been with [her husband] for eight years and sometimes, and, you know, obviously I speak very good English and everything, and I'm a linguist. But sometimes we do have misunderstandings too, because it's cultural, you know, like you are getting used to the reaction from the culture you come from, where you were born and brought up. But I think, again, it's about managers, making sure they know this is a potential derailer and they just keep an eye on it, and manage it, I think.

Interviewer: There's some research - they say that the greater, the cultural differences, the lower, the level of trust in virtual teams, do you think so?

Interviewee: Yes, because you don't understand is, you need to have trust, you need to understand you know, behaviors and what's behind behaviors of the person on your team. But if you don't understand it, or if you perceive it as something which is not right for you, then of course, it's much harder to build trust, because you think they are difficult or they're rude or they are, you know, like, I'm sure that majority of this is all negative.

I would imagine, because if it's all good, then you would build trust, you know, if it's so good, it's only when you don't understand, though, it comes across as something that you don't like or is not acceptable to you or it's… I think that's when it creates issues.

And again, when you had, you know, when you have an ability to meet and you know, you meet people, you have your meeting face-to-face and you go to the restaurant, have dinner together, talk about you know, families, friends, hobbies, everything, then you see the real

Commented [Author584]: *Be able to manage cultural differences in global virtual teams*

Commented [Author585]: Language issues

person and then you understand, okay, maybe in meetings they come across as abrupt, but actually it's nothing to do with them, they're nice.

Interviewer: Yeah, true.

Interviewee: But in virtual teams, when you don't meet, it's harder for you. You need to create these opportunities, I think. When you have this sort of face, you know, like sort of a non-work relationship building. And I also think you need, again, depends where your team are, is, if you're a manager, me managing a team in Philippines or when a lot of your deliverables are done by teams, for example, in Philippines or India or anywhere, I think you should read up on culture. I think you should literally go and read about what the culture is, what's cultural norms, etc.

Commented [Author586]: *It is harder to build trust in virtual teams*

Interviewer: So, you should go to the country?

Interviewee: You should go to the country, even if you… now you can't go to the country [reference to COVID lockdown], you know, like there are lots of… I think you should read about the country and about culture of the country, even if it's Wikipedia, I mean, I know that Wikipedia is the source of knowledge, however, some basic, do you know, like when you go on holidays, you will go and buy a lonely planet guide and you will read up about the country.

So, for example, if I would go to, you know, like last time, we went to Barbados, I read up a bit about Barbados and I was like, okay, so they do this and do this, that, and there's like… I just think you should read up about the countries where your people work, because then you understand, you know, like for example, if they have, I don't know, for example, French.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Commented [Author587]: *Understand cultural differences*

Interviewee: It's important to have lunch for French. That's true. So, for me, if I had French team, I would never put big calls at lunchtime, ever. Do you know what I mean? I would work around this, because I know when you put the big calls, when the French team has lunch, they'll be pissed off, because they want to have their lunch, and it's so important.

Interviewer: Same in Vietnam, I think.

Interviewee: Yes. But you know, but it's not about… and I think by doing this, A you understand what the behavior is, and B, you can work around it to make it more effective, because it's then you have a happy team who has had their lunch.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: It's much nicer, and then there'll be much more productive than a hungry team that is pissed off, that they can't do it. So that's my view. That's what I would do.

Commented [Author588]: *Difference in taking breaks at work*

Interviewer: Yeah. I worked in a virtual team before, and my colleagues deal with Japan and she always had to avoid to call them at night, A.M.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Night is the time that they have the director, the manager, they have meetings, and they don't want anybody to disturb at that time.

Interviewee: Yes. It's like this, so, you know, like for example, I didn't know, no States [US] are different, they always work. Yeah, but you know, like Middle East, they don't work on Fridays, there weekend is Friday, Saturday. So, you don't put many big calls and says denied, because you know it's Friday night for them. And you also try to respect the time differences as well.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Especially, I think it's… I mean, I'm mostly Europe, so it's not bad for me, but if you have an international team, you know, when you have Asia, Europe States, it's when it's tricky.

Interviewer: May I ask you, it's a very good point that managers should adapt themselves for the difference, but in term of the team and in term of… I mean, at corporate level, should the company have a policy to provide those type trainings for managers?

Interviewee: I think, yes. I think if the company has a very diverse type setup, you know, and you do have to deal with a very, you know, like your teams are everywhere. I think it will help of course.

Interviewer: Yeah. So does your company have that kind of set-up?

Interviewee: I think our company has… I think we are quite lucky, it hasn't, in many ways, you know, like a big impact, because I think… especially in the teams that I'm working in, it was just sales and marketing. It's more… everyone is pretty much, you know, the command of language and everything is an efficient level. And I think what's the company is really driving, is company culture and attributes, which are very unified in a way, and also very unifying.

So I think it doesn't come across as this, but what we also do a lot is, you know, we have an internal intranet, which is like a portal where everything is… and there is a lot of articles, updates from all over different regions and people have a voice and they talk about, you know, like when there is a holiday, if it's a, you know, like Diwali in India or, you know, Chinese New Year, etc. there is the everything around.

So you kind of have this sort of cultural references, but I think if company has, you know, like **[unintelligible 41:46]** much diversity, then I think companies should provide it, and at the same time, I still think the managers should.

Interviewer: Should?

Interviewee: Yes. Should do it himself or herself, because I think it will make it efficient, and because at the end of the day, you know, like if the manager who manages a team.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And it's about their relationship with the team.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And I think it just helps to build this, because you understand.

Interviewer: And also like when some issues keep coming up and then you notice that?

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: You get more; you are the person who knows the best.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 42:32]. There's only like two more…

Interviewee: Yes, it's okay.

Interviewer: [unintelligible 42:37]. Thank you very much. So before, when people talk about virtual team and work from home, actually in academic they are two different concepts. It was like a kind of, some people can see as a benefit for the employees and global virtual team in a work-setting to gather talents together. Yeah. But with the COVID-19 many global virtual team members are currently working from home. So instead of from the office as before, so do you think Home base global virtual teams will become more common in the long run?

Interviewee: I think, yes. I think that overall working from home will become a much more widespread across all teams. I personally think there was already a trend. And I think that Covid pandemic just accelerated it really rapidly. I think nowadays all the technologies that is available, teams, networks, cloud-based file sharing, you know, books etc. They make it very easy. So, technology is enabling this set up.

Plus, I think people also saw that impact on environment when you have reduction on travel, you know, cars, etc. And I think also things that I can say to you, my workload tripled. So,

I think one thing that would need to happen when working from home is how you make sure that people switch off actually.

And you know, like how you kind of maintain this side of workload management. I would say, I don't know maybe, but I hear this feedback from everyone, you know, because when you go to the office, you have a switch off, switch on time, while you travel. When you are in the same room all day, it's very easy, you woke up with your clothes on, you know, had shower, exercise, coffee, and then you're on, and then you don't switch and switch off until, you know, forever, but you don't have this physical switch off button.

Commented [Author593]: Health and safety

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think it's almost like to see what, you know, like what can be done to help people to come up with sort of this routine, but returning back to business, I think there are too many benefits.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And yeah, I do things that work from home, especially for… I mean, there are industries when it's impossible, you know, when you do need to have more physical involvement of people, but there are industries which the work can be done from home with no problem, and I do think everyone who can do this will stay or move to a flexible model when you go to the office, like once or twice a week to have meetings face to face or catch up, or, you know, and then you work from home the rest.

Commented [TH594]: Intensity

Interviewer: Yeah. But what are the support policies and management practice, the companies should offer to virtual teams who can work from home? Like we talked about home office, healthcare and things?

Interviewee: Yes. I mean, it's a tricky one, because for example, we now company, there were people who were working from home, like from day go, because of this, you know, like it didn't matter where a person is, you needed to be a part of the… it was more about skill set, and yes, then they have an ability to, you know, like to have the support for equipment, etc.

But I think to make it effective, yes, of course company needs to provide, you know, your office, you know, screen, laptop or the technical support stuff. You may even, you know, it depends if it's in company policy, but I think if you can contribute to, for example, covering the internet, it would be good.

Commented [TH595]: Skill training

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I think technology is very important. I think companies who have the whole technology package, they do well, because they enable people to be effective, and I think from HR perspective, yeah. I do think it's important for HR to come up with solutions, to support people being you know, working from home virtually. But for me now it's kind of much together, because we are all a virtual team, pretty much.

Commented [TH596]: Technology

Interviewer: Before, actually that's the last question.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Yeah, research show that there are many problems that people who work from home have to deal with, like the isolation. Like they don't have the proper home office. So, the family can feel like they are isolated from them, family member also can interfere at any time, and it has the things about like the worry about outside, out mind, and now it affected promotion and also health problems. Well, many people who work from home after a while, they have problems with back because they don't have…

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: …the right chair, or something.

Interviewee: So, do you know what? I totally agree with you, and then I think Covid changed a lot, I think Covid change the fact that… I think many people when they were forced to work from home, went and invested in good office chairs, etc. because it's more permanent, you know, like when you know that you have to do it for like three, four months, you can't sit on the kitchen table. Number one. Number two, I think company helped by giving equipment and everything else to set people up, because, you know, company has had to react so quickly, because obviously they needed to continue work.

Commented [TH597]: Home office

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: So, I think that it's happened, but I think the other thing as well happened, it's cultural shift, I think before Covid, if you had a noise, you know, your cat was meowing or a child screaming, it was like end of the world disaster, and I think people feel under pressure.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I can say to you now. I didn't know, from my experience, no one cares anymore. Children are screaming, cats meowing and dogs barking. It's fine. And the message we had from, you know, like even we had like an all hands call with a very senior person in my company. He was having this, you know, he was updating us and then his little dog came

on and jumped on him and he was like, okay, this is my Covid co-worker, and it's fine. Do you know what I mean?

It's fine, because we were in a way, I think it's the positive that came out of this madness, because people are now much more relaxed. And I can say to you, before Covid, for me to sit in in front of my team with no makeup and hair done, it would be no way. Now I can do my hair like this, because I don't care anymore. Fine. And I'm noticing, you know, like many people became much more relaxed because…

Commented [Author598]: *A cultural shift in working from home*

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: But saying that, I do think if you don't have dedicated space in your home, it's hard. Yes. We are very lucky, because I have my office and I was just doing up, but you know, we both work from home. I don't see him [her husband] during the day. Home downstairs nonstop, and I'm on conference calls upstairs nonstop. But we are lucky, because we do have separate… well, we do have dedicated space. So, for us, it's okay. But I do think people who have... yeah, you know, if it's not enough space, the families, I have a colleague in France, she has two little kids, we had called, the kids came, they had their fall out, you know, like between themselves. So, she had to apologize, put them on mute, tell them whatever she needed to tell them.

Commented [TH599]: Home office

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: And it's okay. I mean, before Covid, we will be all like, oh no, how can, because before Covid, working from home was almost like benefit and everyone was expecting people to be as if you're in your office.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Now, because people were forced to do this by circumstances outside of anyone's control, everyone kind of sits and – oh, we're actually fine. It's okay.

Commented [Author600]: *A cultural shift in working from home*

Interviewer: Yeah, very good point.

Interviewee: [unintelligible 53:59] I think people are much more relaxed, **[crosstalk 54:03 to 54:05]**

Interviewer: I'm sorry the interview is longer.

Interviewee: It's okay, don't worry, I have a day off today, so that's why I said, it will be easy. So, it doesn't have the stress of taking another call. So no, it's a pleasure. I hope it was useful.

Interviewer: It's really useful, but I'm sorry, I used the first day of your holiday for the interview.

Interviewee: Don't worry, it's only a day.

Interviewer: Very quick. So, may I ask for your job title?

Interviewee: I'm senior marketing manager for EMEA.

Interviewer: Senior marketing manager…

Interviewee: For EMEA.

Interviewer: Yes, for EMEA, and how many years of experience in global virtual management have you had?

Interviewee: It's difficult question. But I think the direct management of virtual team, I would probably say, four years.

Interviewer: Four years?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Yeah. And how many people are in your team?

Interviewee: Okay. So, my direct reports is one person, for managing one person.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: A boss. Yeah. But I mean, it's part of the virtual team. I mean, with about… it's 40 of us.

Interviewer: 40, yeah. And where are those people from, Philippine?

Interviewee: No. Majority are in EMEA, so it would be Europe, middle, East in Africa.

Interviewer: Yeah. And your company operates from London?

Interviewee: Yes. Our office is London. Yeah. But our headquarters are in California.

Interviewer: Yeah. And type of business?

Interviewee: It's a technology company.

Interviewer: Technology company, yes, that's it. Thank you so much for...

Interviewee: Well, you're very welcome. I hope it was useful.

Interviewer: It's really helpful. Thank you so much.

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