7 Virtual Team Performance and Wellbeing for Event Management

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Learning outcomes

- ☐ How virtual teams compare to other forms of groups and teams and how to manage virtual teams from formation till redeployment.
- ☐ How culture, leadership, trust and artificial intelligence affect virtual team performance.
- ☐ The key challenges virtual teams face in the digital transformation
- ☐ Explain well-being and cross-cultural variations in relation to event management.
- ☐ Explain the importance of memory research in planning of events.
- ☐ Discuss the role of social psychology in devising event experiences.
- ☐ Discuss psychological factors involved in making an event memorable.

Introduction

This chapter falls in two parts. Part 1 discusses team issues with emphasis on virtual teams. The first few sections briefly compare and contrast the different types of team and how team performance should be planned and managed, in line with set goals and detailed deliverables. This will cover a wide range of concepts that come into play under performance management and measurement. The following sections focus on the challenges that virtual teams face amid the prevailing digital transformation and suggest effective measures to address

those challenges. The presented concepts are generic, thus can be readily applied to the context of event management. Part 2 comprises two sections; the first discusses well-being and cross-cultural variations in relation to event management, while the second section is focused on the role of social psychology in devising event experiences.

Part 1: Virtual Team Issues

How virtual teams differ from traditional teams

Basic concepts

In the context of business management, a team is a group of people tasked with a specific set of deliverables, in order to achieve a certain goal that is typically aligned with the strategic objectives of the organisation. Team members can share the same discipline or may be multidisciplinary. Teams who share the same discipline sometimes enjoy more homogeneity unlike the heterogenous nature of multidisciplinary teams. On the one hand, there is a valid argument that while the former may facilitate harmony and cohesiveness; the latter may yield better outcome due to constructive conflict and the wider scope of members coming from different backgrounds. When managed properly this can generate innovative and more efficient outcomes. On the other hand, heterogenous teams may find it challenging to manage and control conflicts, due to different perceptions and mindsets, let alone the variance in culture and leadership style, in some cases, associated with different disciplines.

Teams can take different shapes and forms. Project teams are typically responsible for delivering a specific project from inception to completion. At the close-out phase, the team may be deployed to another project as whole or members may be allocated to different projects. Some may have to go if there are no live or potential projects. Task forces are quite similar to project teams, but linked to a specific task amid relatively higher uncertainty compared to a project, which would typically comprise an array of tasks and perhaps a wider scope but with more identified risk scenarios. For example, the USA administration put in place a task force to manage the COVID19 pandemic and report to the president and the nation. In this case, the task force has to deal with day to day developments and has to act proactively and reactively at the same time in a very blurred and uncontrolled environment. This, in some cases, is known as crisis management teams.

Teams can be part of a system tasked with operational or strategic deliverables, such as sales teams, admission and recruitment teams, customer

service teams, technical support teams, etc. The common factor among these teams is the repetition of activities and tasks towards specific objectives throughout the team lifecycle. Project teams will have a different set of deliverables with every new project. For example, an admission team in a university will be tasked with recruiting new students and this will carry on as long as the university exists. They may use different methods, develop new tools, reach out to different markets and/or offer new programmes but the deliverable is always the same – new students. Compare this to a construction project team. The processes and methods may stay the same, but the deliverables may vary significantly. For example, laying bricks or painting walls do not vary much in the process or methods but deliverables may depend on what is being built – a fence, a lodge or a high-rise building.

Effective leadership that promotes reliable, open and swift communication besides adaptive yet capable systems and with subsequent policies, procedures and tools in place, will breed and nurture the level of motivation and engagement that will yield the will to win and the team spirit that helps sail safe through difficult challenges. Indeed, this should be mentored and monitored by the team leader. In the business management context, self organising teams are quite popular in managing software development projects under what is known as *Agile* project management teams.

Agile teams may extend beyond the context of project management in general, and software development, in particular. In a nutshell, agility means flexibility amid the vibrant and continually changing business environment. All effective teams should embrace agility in one form or another. Agility is a culture, not just a framework or a set of procedures and guidelines. Indeed, team members should nurture and master appropriate and adequate skills that would facilitate the effective and efficient management of change. Yet if the team culture, intrinsically, is sceptical about change, then the team will most likely show significant resistance, thus deviating from the first principles of agility.

To conclude this section, it is worth noting that regardless of the type of team or the context within which it is operating, some basic concepts tend to prevail, which emphasises how leadership and team culture are critical in shaping team performance.

Virtual teams

Virtual teams are a special type of teams where members work remotely and do not or very rarely meet in person. Virtual teams can work across geographical locations with members in different countries or even different continents. The rise of globalisation has witnessed a surge in virtual