# Virtual Leadership – Accelerating Group Politics

**Dr.Chabi Gupta,**
Christ University Delhi NCR
**Dr. S. Pramila,**
Christ University Delhi NCR

**ABSTRACT**

The current scenario may present achance to hasten the expansion of leadership capability to build those judgments. In lots of ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has turned into an uninvited worldwide economic experiment. Despite the enormous challenges that businesses are facing, the crisis presents opportunity to squash leadership and spread choice-making for better quickness and resilience.

Virtual teams are becoming increasingly prevalent in today's corporate climate. As a consequence, leading a virtual team becomes critical. Virtual team leadership is undeniably more challenging than traditional team leadership (Carte et al., 2006). Becoming a trusted advisor takes more time than working in a conventional team setting. Assigned virtual leaders must also prove their reliability (Al-Ani et al., 2011). A decade of study has helped us better understand successful leadership in virtual teams.

How does virtual leadership affect group politics or power play? Does it exhibit an increased level of group power play in organisations where groups are cohesive and well organised? Do people view virtual leadership as a necessity, boon or bane? This research will empirically discuss these issues related to virtual leadership. Also some strategies for effective virtual leadership have been suggested during the course of the research. Finally, it concludes that one essential to effective virtual work in today's difficult environment is captivating a step back and evaluating decision-making structure and allocation.

**KEYWORDS:** Virtual Leadership, Cohesive, Group Politics,

## INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that video conference and remote work options have advanced significantly in recent years, many important business conversations and interactions are still conducted in person. The greatest way to establish and maintain trust and openness, which are required for effective communication, information exchange, and commitment fulfilment, is in person. For the foreseeable future, the incapability to bring external and internal stakeholders jointly in person makes decision-making more difficult and raises the risk of conflict. The most urgent problem for companies in the present environment is how senior executives can interact digitally with stakeholders and internal teams.

The incapacity to bring external and internal stakeholders mutually in person for the near future makes decision-making more difficult and raises the likelihood of conflict. In today's environment, the most pressing issue for businesses is how to digitally engage with stakeholders and internal team members in critical decision-making procedures in ways that enhance trust, transparency, and collaboration. The crisis also presents a crucial opportunity to second thoughts how decision-making is distributed and managed on a local and global level.

## TRANSITION TO VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP

As a consequence of the rapid shift to remote employment, other problems have emerged. Measuring, managing, and holding individuals responsible for their performance are never simple. In this increasingly virtual environment, where it's much easier for individuals to become virtually invisible, how can we recognise and reward outstanding performance while also dealing with presentation difficulties? Even if their own stress levels have risen as a consequence of the epidemic, executives must be more responsive than ever to the needs of their companies and their employees. With increasing tilt towards virtual leadership and managing teams virtually, there is a considerable increase expected in group power politics. There is no person who can lead and manage the team within close quarters and virtual has its own limitations in setting up directions, clarity of job roles, ensuring compliance and effective appraisals.

## VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP: REQUIRED COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERS

Today's teams are more scattered and varied thanks to the internet and its many communication options. Studies are currently underway to determine how leadership has evolved to suit the changing requirements of these new and diverse populations. This study examines virtual leadership and how it is evolving as more teams leave conventional team contexts. It examines virtual leadership duties, responsibilities, and skills, highlights difficulties specific to virtual teams, and analyses global leadership implications.Taking care of oneself is the first step to effectively working remotely, similar to putting on your own oxygen mask before assisting others. We have significant practical expertise with virtual work and can vouch for its

significance.The instant set of keys to effective virtual work is setting up and conducting virtual meetings. Making choices online takes more time and effort than in person.

## HIGH-PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES FOR LEADING VIRTUALLY

These ideas originate from a century of working, studying, and advising with top businesses worldwide on problems of leadership, collaboration, and work design, including virtual work. We've put mutually the following ideas and guidance on how to enhance the quality and effect of leadership while working remotely in these tumultuous times based on that practice and what we're seeing in our businesses and enquiry from customers now. The following suggestions make a virtual team more efficient.

How to manage a virtual team – 7 success suggestions for Virtual team management
Use these seven virtual team leader techniques to keep your virtual team happy, efficient, and productive.

1. Ensure good communication-Establish a weekly virtual check-in. This will improve virtual team communication.

2. Use proper tools-Any virtual team needs an instant communications solution like Slack. Invest in project management software. It will streamline communication, documentation, and cooperation.

3. Create trust-As a leader, you must gain your virtual team's trust. Transparency, honesty, and sincerity are required. It also helps your team bond. This will improve member trust and cooperation.

4. Goals-Help your team establish personal goals while contributing to the team's goals. This will give them pride in their job. Make sure everyone knows the team's goals and how they're assessed.

5. Encourage your virtual team-Working remotely may be lonely, so encourage your virtual colleagues. Maintain frequent one-on-ones and an open-door policy to let them know you're accessible.

6. Keep in touch-Giving frequent feedback on their performance helps keep virtual workers motivated. It also helps identify possible issues before they escalate.

7. Look for your team's health-The epidemic is causing many individuals emotional and physical distress, which affects our job. Add to it the loneliness and isolation many people feel working from home, and you have a recipe for catastrophe.

Promote team wellness by scheduling frequent meetings and shifting responsibilities as needed.

Four tech suggestions for your virtual team with so many virtual team technology options, it's hard to know where to start.

1. How to select the best option for your team? Consider your team's needs.

2. What does your team require to operate efficiently? Consider polling them.

3. Look for easy-to-use software and tools. Make sure the software you choose is simple to use and connects with your team's existing tools. Work together and communicate better. Look for technologies that enhance human connection. Create virtual conference spaces.

4. Project management software (PMS) Invest in workflow management and team communication tools. This will assist prevent information silos.

## LEADING REMOTELY – CHALLENGING YET CONVENIENT

The epidemic of COVID-19 has put the working world into chaos, presenting unforeseen economic and leadership issues. Some businesses are rushing to implement new distribution channels, products, and operating techniques without fully considering the implications of their decisions. As a consequence, many CEOs are shooting from the hip, unable to properly engage with stakeholders and get consensus on a plan of action via their usual channels. As a consequence of the fast shift to remote work, businesses are confronted with new challenges, yet survey data shows that businesses all over the globe are experimenting with creative solutions. When leading remotely, the most successful communication includes five characteristics: It's frequent, honest, a two-way conversation, simple to navigate, and consistent. In order to interact successfully with remote work teams, leaders must guarantee this. The goal is to create a welcoming and friendly work environment rather than one that is unfriendly and averse.

Lunch and learns, coffee breaks, online fitness courses, and happy hours were all mentioned as ways for businesses to assist workers in overcoming social isolation. These activities were not as popular with the public as individual check-ins, and they were equally likely to be included in the bottom and top quartiles. Online happy hours and yoga classes are excellent methods to promote social connection, but they can't take the place of leaders checking in with their employees in person.To avoid the problems of remote work, consider leadership and management in a hybrid virtual reality. Leaders and teams must interact to create the social cohesiveness and united hybrid virtual culture that businesses need in the future.

Emotions can be difficult for managers to manage. Traditional business wisdom may teach you to avoid or suppress your emotions, that they are messy and have no place in the workplace. Of course, we all know this isn't the case. Emotions are a huge part of everyday life, and they can't be avoided at work.

Preparation and agendas are key to successful remote meetings. While meeting science teaches us that being unprepared is terrible in every situation, we can frequently get away with it when meeting in person. Meeting remotely is more difficult, both logistically and mentally, so leaders must spend more time preparing everyone and crafting the agenda.

Remote meetings should be kept short and have a clear objective. Meeting in big numbers is difficult in any case: The smaller the group, the simpler it is to hear everyone and make choices. Large groups are less productive and have shorter attention spans while working remotely. Axiomatic topics should be kept off the agenda and the group should be kept small. Keep in mind that many individuals who work from home, particularly those with families, have conflicting obligations. One approach is to have more regular yet concentrated meetings. Leaders should reduce the amount of recurrent meetings as they get more familiar with the new operational procedures.

Create virtual team meetings. A national sales meeting or developer conference may be replaced by "un-conferences" or other forms that blend formal information exchange with peer learning and connection development. Like a conventional conference, there may be large group sessions for everyone and concurrent smaller group sessions for particular roles and regions. Outside of the official conference programme, networking and chance meetings are difficult to duplicate, but the present scenario allows for innovative solutions that use new collaboration platforms and technology to bring people together. In the short and long term, these virtual solutions will improve meeting and event flexibility, inclusiveness, and accessibility for businesses.

## LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL TOOLS: INSIGHTS FROM SOCIAL MOVEMENT STUDIES

Several recent studies examine social and political events, particularly grassroots movements like Occupy and Tea Party (Agarwal et al., 2014), the Umbrella Movement in China (Lee and Man Chan, 2016), and political tensions in Russia (Lee and Man Chan, 2016). (Toepfl, 2018). Leader is defined as someone who leads collective activity and develops collective identities (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004). Their focus on the social character of leadership in the new digital age is important to our study. These studies look at how social media and digital technologies are changing leadership, organisational structure, norms, and hierarchy, and how to manage and maintain agreement (David and Baden, 2018). Horizontal and leaderless leadership are new types of leadership (Castells, 2012; Bennett and Segerberg, 2013). Leaderless describes a lack of power stratification among members in movements and organisations that are defined by horizontality (Sitrin, 2006; Gerbaudo, 2017).Similarly, recent research on the usage of digital tools by social movement participants shows how new ICTs have altered power struggles: In disrupting conventional modes of [social] organisation, ICTs have reshaped the power dynamics of social movement politics (Agarwal et al., 2014, p. 327).

The ultra-orthodox group is a good example of how digital technologies and social media can undermine authoritarian authority (David and Baden, 2018). The fluidity and temporality of digital media has evolved to become an important, independent force influencing community opinion (David and Baden, 2018, p. 14). Thus, both internal and external players utilise digital media to question a closed and inaccessible community's identity and leadership.

## POLITICS IN VIRTUAL WORKPLACE

Politics is inescapable in every workplace, virtual or physical. Workplace politics is mostly determined by individual ambitions and motives, as well as corporate culture. Political processes may be overt in rigid hierarchies or hidden in less bureaucratic ones. Whether overt or covert, political processes harm organizational health.

Influence techniques used by virtual team members vary. Virtual team members' influence techniques affect:
➢ Making choices
➢ Execution of policies and plans
➢ Team members' drive and dedication
➢ Levels of teamwork and cooperation

This directly affects the worldwide virtual team's productivity. Thus, understanding and managing virtual workplace politics is one of the virtual team leader's most essential duties.

During their contacts with others, members use various influence techniques such as aggressiveness, logical persuasion, consultation, pressure, blocking, and upward appeal. The virtual team members' influence techniques are heavily influenced by four factors:

Limited Familiarity: Members of global virtual teams from various cultures and backgrounds struggle to grasp the behavioural norms and communication patterns of others. People use persuasion and consultation to prevent unpleasant circumstances and misunderstandings.

Unlike collocated teams, virtual teams use communication tools to engage in a limited period focused on tasks and milestones. This leaves little time to discuss social issues. Due to the absence of informal contacts, members have little time for office politics.

Virtual team members are less emotionally invested. So they don't bother trying to influence each other and find internal politics boring.

## DEALING WITH ISSUES RELATED TO VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP

So, how can we cope with sentiments when individuals are working in different places and emotions are high? Face-to-face interaction is often expressed as a source of discontent among managers and workers.

Supervisors worry that their employees will not work as hard or as effectively as they should (though research indicates otherwise, at least for some types of jobs). Many workers, on the other hand, are frustrated by a lack of management support and communication. Employees may feel that their distant supervisors are unaware of their needs and, as a consequence, are unsupportive and unhelpful in accomplishing their duties. This tendency extends beyond task-related work to interpersonal problems that may develop between co-workers who are geographically separated. According to studies, remote employees who lack "mutual knowledge" are less willing to give co-workers the benefit of the doubt in difficult circumstances. Such workers if left dissatisfied or their voice and opinion unheard during a virtual meeting, it gives rise to dissent. Such people come together to discuss their issues and a negative bonding emerges from such interactions with no person to observe their change in behaviour. Virtually, to the leader all seems fine and working well. He doesn't realize that there has started a group power play or politics which will breed into something more of not attended to.

One of the most common complaints regarding remote work is that employees lose the informal social connections of an office environment. Extraverts are believed to be more solitary in the short term, particularly if they work remotely and don't have the chance to interact with people. Isolation, on the other hand, may make any employee feel less "belonging" to their firm over time, and may even make them want to quit.

Four Ways to Make Informal Interactions Easier

1. Manage your connections and expand the number of contact points outside of your usual group. Short check-in meetings, virtual happy hours, and Q&A sessions are all good ways to accomplish this.

2. Make a conscious effort to reconnect with important members of your team. When you work in a co working space, you may expect to run into individuals in the corridors or when you go into a meeting and see people exiting the prior meeting. When working online, such accidental meetings may lead to a slew of crucial conversations. Rather than depending on coincidence, which works great when working face to face, take the time and effort to recreate such encounters with each team member.

3. Ascertain that the whole team communicates on a regular basis. Virtual teams need time and space to review work processes, exchange information about how things are doing outside of work, and connect socially. Because it's possible for certain individuals to feel excluded when working remotely, make sure everyone is involved and contributes.

4. Make fun with a cause. When working remotely, it's especially important to remember that teaming isn't only about the job. Keeping people's spirits up and promoting great performance requires creating a pleasant, engaging workplace. This has become much more difficult in this new virtual world of work, which makes it all the more essential to do, since people want it throughout their workdays, not just at team meetings. If you can offer them that freedom while still executing your team's job, dedication and productivity will skyrocket.

**STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP**

Remote work becomes more effective and gratifying when managers establish expectations for their teams' communication frequency, methods, and optimum time. "For daily check-in meetings, we utilise videoconferencing," says one employee, "but when something is urgent, we use instant messaging." Also, if feasible, let your employees know the best way to reach you throughout the workday (for example, "I'm more available late in the day for ad hoc phone or video conversations, but if there's an emergency earlier in the day, send me a text.") Finally, (to the degree feasible), monitor team member communication to verify that they are giving information as required. According to studies on emotional intelligence and emotional contagion, employees turn to their leaders for guidance on how to respond to fast changes or crisis situations. If a boss displays stress and helplessness, it will have a "trickle-down" effect on employees, according to Daniel Goleman. Effective leaders use a two-pronged approach, recognising their workers' worry and anxiety while also confirming their confidence in their teams using words such as "we've got this," "this is challenging, but I believe we can manage it," and "let's search for ways to utilise our strengths during this time." This help will be beneficial to the employees.

**Leaders' Skills in the Digital Era**

The literature has grown interested in defining what abilities define digital leaders. Studies examine the abilities e-leaders need to be successful. Scholars argue whether the abilities required to manage e-businesses vary from those required to lead conventional companies (Horner-Long and Schoenberg, 2002). (Lynn Pulley and Sessa 2001; Horner-Long and Schoenberg 2002; Schwarzmüller et al. 2018, Sousa and Rocha 2018). Some studies combine expert surveys with interviews with IT professionals and C-level managers (Sousa and Rocha, 2018). (Horner-Long and Schoenberg, 2002).Developing digital leadership skills.To lead in the digital age, one must be both people-oriented and technically savvy (Diamante and London, 2002). These two talents typically define quite different types of individuals who must work together to execute a successful digital transformation. Coutu (2000) presents a case study that emphasises the necessity for cross-functional and cross-skill contamination between people-oriented (e.g., sales) and IT executives. The most efficient method to disseminate information and skills throughout an organisation is systematic knowledge distribution from individual to group (Boe and Torgersen, 2018). Coutu (2000) describes how reverse-mentoring programmes

may be used to cross-contaminate skills. As a result, the author exposes the issue of possible generational conflicts, wherein younger generations, who are more educated and competent in digital technologies, may acquire informational dominance over older, change-averse generations (Coutu, 2000).

## MANAGE DEVELOPMENT

When working remotely, the third set of key to success is good communication and comment: Organic chances for low-stakes statement, such as expressing a quick remark before or after a meeting, are becoming increasingly difficult to come by.

Be deliberate in your comments. During this period, don't allow the lack of natural in-person chances to give feedback stifle team growth. In a typical setting, it's simple to give advice or constructive criticism at the conclusion of a meeting or when a team member stops by your office. It's more difficult to give feedback over the phone or through videoconference, which is why leaders must make a conscious effort to provide the space and time to do so. Check-in discussions with team members that last 10 to 15 minutes and are planned in between other meetings may help replicate the spontaneous moments that used to take place in person. As a supplement to video or phone-based discussions, instant messaging or SMS may be useful for short check-ins.

Fill up the social void left by missing casual encounters. Many spontaneous contacts in an office environment are difficult to replicate remotely, such as casual chat before, during, and after meetings; accidental encounters in the corridor and cafeteria; and individuals stopping by your office simply to say hello. These actions broaden the "surface area" of your workplace interpersonal connections and accelerate action. Now since you're working 100 percent online, those things aren't going to happen by themselves, so you'll have to plan ahead.

## THE THREE MOST SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL TEAMS

We found three successful virtual teams so you may follow in their footsteps. Let's see how they do it.

### 1. Google

When the COVID-19 epidemic hit in 2020, Google was one of the first businesses to provide work-from-home alternatives. They will be exploring hybrid models when staff returns to work in 2021. What they do: Google values its 135,000 full-time employees globally. They establish team standards and have frequent team meetings. They urge teammates to be present and celebrate each other's wins.

### 2. AirBnb

The company likewise shuttered offices at the onset of the epidemic and is allowing its workers to work remotely until August 2021. Airbnb gave workers $500 to spend on home offices and ergonomic equipment. They also provided flexible work schedules and $500 in AirBnb credit.

### 3. AppDynamics

Employees may work from any of AppD's locations, a satellite office, a co working space, or from home. Provide remote employees with customised home office equipment. They conduct ergonomic testing to ensure staff comfort and productivity.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research a sample data of 3000 people was taken and analysed through their filling up of a questionnaire as to whether they were aware of what virtual leadership is? Have they ever themselves been a part of it earlier or now? If yes, then what were the experiences they had either being a virtual leader or being a part of a virtual led team? Were they likely to experience such a situation more often than ever beyond the pandemic? Did they experience increased group politics or power play during the time they were virtually led? What role did the top management play in encouraging virtual leadership and creating a remotely led workforce for the company? Did they experience any loss of productivity with a virtual leader giving them the direction? To consider its applicability in a narrow horizon, this sample data belonged only to the academics/universities and not across all industries.

During the pandemic, all academic activity moved online with a leader working away from the campus in charge of the workforce who also worked remotely from their homes instead of offices. So, this condition was thrust upon the universities without there being any choice or alternative. Virtual leadership was the only option to adopt during the crisis. While some of these issues may appear to be common in any workplace, they can be especially difficult for virtual teams who lack face time and a real office. Virtual leaders, on the other hand, may successfully establish and manage highly productive remote teams with the correct abilities and training.

## OBSERVATIONS

From the data studied, it was clearly observed that majority of the people were not in favour of virtual leadership and it was clearly not an option if they had to choose. It may be because they are seated together and have more face time when teams and their leaders work on-site, they may be naturally inclined to cooperate more regularly.

Every leader must be able to motivate staff to collaborate through defined roles and duties, effective communication, and goal-setting. However, for remote leaders, improving workplace collaboration necessitates more advanced communication and team alignment capabilities.The significant increase in virtual employees will have a huge positive influence on employee morale, productivity, and overhead expenses. However, in

order to successfully establish and lead remote teams, companies must have the correct virtual leadership in place.

Teams and their managers are staffed on-site in the traditional office, giving them face time to discuss, work together, and provide feedback. This is the most appropriate setting for effective leadership, according to observations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIRTUAL LEADERS

- Virtual leaders must educate all members on participation and cannot expect that conventional work practises would easily transfer to virtual environments.
- Leaders must be able to coordinate across cultures, time zones, and languages. Team members must develop trust and cohesiveness in order to establish shared aims and objectives.
- Leaders should offer virtual environments where authorized/concerned members may assign and monitor tasks and relational responsibilities.
- Leaders must create communication guidelines for internal communication among members to prevent misunderstanding.
- Leaders should choose and approve suitable technologies for work and communication, but users should be able to chose and adapt as needed.
- This includes presenting presents, monetary prizes, or certificates of gratitude to members. Leader should also practise giving gold stars to members who excel. Members will realise the value of their effort and perform better in the future.
- The virtual leader should create an expert directory early. Photo, prior experience, training, assignments, and professional connections should be included in this database.
- In a virtual context, a skills matrix should be accessible for all team members to show their competence. To establish competency-based trust, an expertise directory or skills matrix is ideal.
- Finally, good leadership should ensure that every member of the team has equal chance to learn, contribute, and develop.

## CONCLUSION

Virtual leaders have a unique set of obstacles when their employees are geographically separated, as they are in most modern companies today.

- Managing staff in a variety of locations and time zones
- Creating a culture of trust and open lines of communication
- Creating a routine
- Making remote workers experience like they're a part of the team

While some of these issues may appear to be common in any workplace, they can be especially difficult for virtual teams who lack face time and a real office. Virtual leaders, on the other hand, may successfully establish and manage highly productive remote teams with the correct abilities and training.

Virtual work environments are more flexible than traditional work environments. The virtual team uses synchronous and asynchronous ways to interact. Cameras and cameras may be used to monitor team members online. A team leader may utilise both asynchronous and synchronous ways to evaluate a member. Synchronous relates to virtual meetings and communications, while Asynchronous refers to electronic papers and knowledge repositories.

Leadership of virtual teams clearly requires management and leadership abilities. Because virtual teams include people from all over the world, it is difficult to coordinate and bridge the distance between them. It is the leader's main duty to create a working environment where team members may freely exchange information, skills, and contribute to team achievement.

Virtual teams are not always up to with the newest technology. The virtual team members often criticize about the lack of performance-enhancing software and hold the leader accountable for providing it. The leader expects team members to learn the necessary tools for the task. Leaders should not prevent team members from using certain technologies. Leaders should set criteria for team member tool use but be flexible to enable various kinds of tools for greater performance.

Members' emotional emotions, cohesiveness, norms, information exchange, and incentives are also virtual team leaders' responsibilities. Management must create new competencies in virtual leaders. Thus, virtual leaders must be trained. Members must also be trained to improve their abilities. Because leading a virtual workforce is a difficult task, the rewards must be substantial to encourage leaders. Because these teams need to consult specialists from different regions, members must be familiar with their cultural norms and values. The team members must be taught to think globally and act locally.

It is well understood that when companies operate in virtual environments, the working atmosphere and leadership styles must be modified. Finally, the company should train leaders for virtual team management in the future.

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