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## **Building Virtual Teams** *in Wake of Emerging Remote-Working culture*

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The prolonged lockdowns and shutdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic forced organisations to move to a remote working system or work-from-home (WFH) system. By the time the intensity of the coronavirus pandemic had just started subsiding, the energy-shortage fuelled by the Ukraine war and the sweltering heat wave in Europe and elsewhere from June-July again compelled countries and organisations to take recourse to the work-from-home (WFH) system. Hence, a remote working or WFH system has been ephemerally a compulsion and now potentially a trend across the world.

In the meantime, research works have reported the differences between the employees and their top management regarding the WFH system. While Microsoft found that 50 percent of companies want their employees to return to the office full-time ([Microsoft, 2022 March](#)), employees who worked at home during the pandemic shutdowns seem loath to come back to the office. At the same time, companies want people to come back. The Pew Research Foundation discovered that 61 percent of the people working from home were doing so by choice – not because there was not an office to go to ([Liu, 2022 February](#)).

While the British government announced the policy to promote in-person workplaces from the second quarter of 2022, the Dutch parliament on July 5, 2022, voted to require companies to "carefully consider" any request for remote work ([Lucas, 2022](#)). If the boss denies it, the company will have to explain why under the legislation. The law of the Netherlands came at the height of the unprecedented heat waves in Europe following the Ukraine war-led fuel crisis.

In the either of the varying practices in different countries and organisations, the WFH is likely to stay in one form and intensity or the other in the world. It will remain a part of a hybrid work system in an organisation. Hence, organisations will continue to face the imperative to build and mobilise virtual teams to achieve organisation goals.

An unprecedented casualty the corona pandemic has brought about is 'crisis of trust' among the workers and other human beings at workplaces and marketplaces, as it compelled one to distrust other over the fears of coronavirus infection (Sthapit, 2022 June). And the distrust has gone very pervasive among people. Then, virtual teams have emerged as a way that can *literally salvage* us from the awkward 'crisis of trust.'

However, *remote working* practices are not just new; they had already become common in modern organisations, esp., in the ICT sector from the beginning of this new millennium. The COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing crises changed the entire scenario; these developments have seen remote collaboration spike dramatically and 'virtual' teams forming almost overnight (Sthapit, 2022 June). Hence, organisations need to build and run effective remote teams.

A virtual team consists of members working together to achieve the same goal, but they work from physically distant areas. It is but natural that the numerical measurement called 'distance' between team members distinguishes a virtual team from a conventional team, so that such virtual teams most likely to remain even post-COVID era (Sthapit, 2022 June).

The quick surge in virtual teams has prompted a search for solutions to develop/manage them: the ones that will help maintain both an organisation's operational viability and employee well-being. HR managers and professionals should explore and identify pathways to better manage and support their virtual teams, as such teams have become a necessity in today's *world of work*.

Virtual teams, however, are likely to deal with more challenges than face-to-face teams because they must rely on electronic communications, have less things in common, and potentially less overlap of working hours (Sthapit, 2022 June). There's a challenges' galore in this part of the world, thanks to poor Internet connectivity and threats to uninterrupted service of internet service providers (ISPs).

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For building effective virtual teams, managers should engage themselves in four key functional areas: i) promote strategic human resource development across the organisation and its teams by teaching and training teams about how to work together and coordinate (Sthapit, 2021 August; Sthapit, 2020; Sthapit, 2014); ii) build team cohesion and trust; iii) ensure there is effective information sharing; and iv) establish the right team leaders (Sthapit, 2022 June).

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