Introduction to Global Virtual Teams

Michael J. Hine
Sprott School of Business
Carleton University
mike.hine@carleton.ca

Derrick L. Cogburn
School of International Service
American University
dcogburn@american.edu

The Global Virtual Teams mini-track has existed since HICSS 42 and continues to attract many high quality papers that elucidate new issues, and address current issues, in global virtual team practice and research. For three years, along with several other colleagues, we have delivered a linked workshop on Cross-Cultural Global Virtual Teams. In addition, this year we are introducing a workshop on the use of big data and text analytics to study global virtual teams. We are very excited about these new and continued initiatives designed to facilitate growth and interest in the mini-track.

Operating in a global setting enabled with distributed and virtual teams has become the norm for many organizations. As the organizational form has become more dominant, the type of work being executed by said form is evolving as well, with an increased focus on strategic complex tasks that have a high degree of ambiguity associated with them. This shift, along with the unique challenge of working virtually with individuals and sub-groups from different countries, with different cultures and different first languages continues to ensure that global virtual research is an exciting and relevant topic of inquiry.

This mini-track focuses on the investigation of theoretical and empirical issues about effective management and operation of global virtual teams in today's dynamic business, scientific and technology environments.

Five papers representing a broad spectrum of global virtual team research have been accepted to this year’s mini-track. The first paper studies how gender and offline cultural context can potentially affect the performance and participation of participants of global virtual teams. The second paper is an interesting case study on how global virtual team leaders can create an environment that allows team members to ‘maintain face’. The third paper also focuses on leadership within global virtual teams. Specifically it presents the results of a study on how shared leadership interacts with team coordination and the boundaries of global virtual teams. The fourth paper presents a case study of an organization that designed and implemented blogging software throughout its operations. The blogging software was effective as it supported information sharing across the organization and supported various enablers of distributed and virtual work. The final paper is a fascinating study of how storytelling was used as a knowledge transfer technique in offshore outsourced projects. Specifically the study focused on the effects of storytelling on relationship building within virtual teams.

We are thrilled to be co-chairing this year’s Global Virtual Team mini-track and we are confident that the accepted papers will stimulate productive conversation and the exchange of new ideas and research opportunities.