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Leadership in a Virtually-connected World

Overview:

2020 has re-defined the world—socially, politically, medically, psychologically, and organizationally. As more and more organizations adopt work-from-home policies and employees stay connected over virtual means, leaders and managers contemplate how effective, efficient, and competent they are as e-leaders. Although digital technologies such as e-mails, chats, instant messaging and video conferences had been commonly accepted modes of communication in the last decade or so, these were seen as complementary to, not substitutes of live physical presence. But as the world gets redefined and virtuality becomes a norm rather than the exception, what are the some of the challenges and opportunities that lie in store for global business leaders. We will try to address these issues in this SNOC by organizing the course around certain pertinent questions in the following four themes:

1. E-leadership: What does the existing scholarly literature say about leadership exercised via virtual means? What are the ways to inspire trust and belongingness in virtual teams?
2. Virtual Workforce: Are employees sufficiently engaged in the electronically connected workforce and teams? What drives their engagement?
3. Communication Technologies: How does technology interact with social and psychological dimensions of workplace behavior, especially when there are multiple channels available?
4. Global Outlook: As teams are geographically dispersed in different countries around the world, what are the cultural dimensions that the leader must be sensitive to.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, you can expect the following learning outcomes:

- A nuanced approach to understanding and enhancing the virtual leadership effectiveness vis-à-vis a more engaged workforce
- A systematic framework for understanding the advantages and disadvantages of diverse communication technologies and using technology to your advantage
- A sensitivity towards cross-cultural differences that play out in virtual team operations, and ways to address them

Evaluation (details on each will be provided at the start of the course):

- Individual Take-home Assignments: 30%
- End-term Quiz/Assignment: 30%
- Team Presentations and Project: 40%

This is a half-term course (17.5 hours; 90-min class sessions, with 2 synchronous meetings per week. Total 12 sessions)

Pedagogy

The course will be conducted via a diverse mix of pedagogical tools, such as case studies, videos, and team exercises and 'virtual cultural immersion' exercises.
A coursepack of readings and cases will be shared electronically.

We will also draw from this book, which is available as an e-book from the publisher:

Lojeski, K. S. (2009). **Leading the virtual workforce: How great leaders transform organizations in the 21st century** (Vol. 14). John Wiley & Sons.

In order to appreciate the relevance of the course, please go through some of the representative mainstream articles that have come out in Feb-May 2020 time period, in the wake of the pandemic.

- Feldman, E., and Mazmanian, M. (May 04, 2020) **Why time signals still matter when working remotely**. *Sloan Review, MIT*
- Felps, W. (Feb, 2020) **10 best practice tips for leading virtual teams**, *Business Think,* UNSW, Australia
- Grant, A (11th May, 2020) **How science can fix remote work**, WorkLife with Adam Grant [Audio Podcast]
- **Uber lays off 3,500 employees over a Zoom call**—The way in which a company downsizes Its staff says a lot about the organization (May, 13, 2020), Forbes.

Reading List (some of these—especially the journal articles-- serve as source material for the lecture and you may not have to read them fully). Other business cases/articles may be added.

Module 1: E-Leaderhip

Lojeski's book:
1. Chapter 7 The Virtual Distance Leadership Model
2. Chapter 8 The Future of Leadership As We Know it
3. Chapter 9 A Different View of Leadership Altogether

4. Avolio, B. J., Sosik, J. J., Kahai, S. S., & Baker, B. (2014). **E-leadership: Re-examining transformations in leadership source and transmission**. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(1), 105-131.
5. Kayworth, T. R., & Leidner, D. E. (2002). **Leadership effectiveness in global virtual teams**. *Journal of Management Information Systems,* 18(3), 7–40.

6. Hinds, P., Retelny, D., & Cramton, C. (2015, February). **In the flow, being heard, and having opportunities: Sources of power and power dynamics in global teams**. In *Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing* (pp. 864-875).

Module 2: Virtual Workforce

Case: Goodall, K., & Roberts, J. (2003). Only connect: teamwork in the multinational. *Journal of World Business*, 38(2), 150-164.

1. Molinsky, A (2018, May 14). **How to keep a global team engaged**, *HBR*

2. Saunders, C., Van Slyke, C., & Vogel, D. R. (2004). **My time or yours? Managing time visions in global virtual teams**. *Academy of Management Perspectives,* 18(1), 19-37.

3. Hasse, M. (2015, Sep). **The real reason your multinational team has trouble communicating,** *Knowledge at Wharton*

4. Ferrazzi, K. (2014). **Getting virtual teams right**. *Harvard Business Review*, 92(12), 120-123.

5. Zakaria, N., Amelinckx, A., & Wilemon, D. 2004. **Working together apart? Building a knowledge-sharing culture for global virtual teams**. *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 13:,15-29

Module 3: Technology/E-Tools

Case Scenario: Uber Lays Off 3,500 Employees Over A Zoom Call—The Way In Which A Company Downsizes Its Staff Says A Lot About The Organization (May, 13, 2020), Forbes.

1. Sivunen, A., & Valo, M. (2006). **Team leaders' technology choice in virtual teams**. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication,* 49(1), 57-68.

2. Klitmøller, A., & Lauring, J. (2013). **When global virtual teams share knowledge: Media richness, cultural difference and language commonality.** *Journal of World Business*, 48(3), 398-406.

3. Sylvain Leduc , Laure Guilbert , Gérard Vallery (2015) **Impact of ICTs on leadership practices: representations and actions**. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*

4. Gonzales-Herrero, A., & Smith, S. (2008). **Crisis communications management on the web: How Internet-based technologies are changing the way public relations professionals handle business crises**. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 16(3), 143-163.

Module 4: Global Outlook

Case: Gladwell, M (2008). ***Outliers,*** chapter 7: **The Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes**

Ethnic Theory of Plane Crashes

1. Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J., & Minkov, M. (2010). **Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind.** U.S.: McGraw-Hill. (Chapter 2,3)

2. Nisbett, R (2005). T**he Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently...and Why**. NY: Simon & Schuster (Chapter 4)

3. Hall, E.T. (1960, 1981). **The Silent Language of Overseas Business**, *HBR*