

Technical Communication

Cultural Differences With Virtual Teams

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Proposal Assignment

TECM 4180 / Section 001

Overview

Working with teams in India causes a lot of problems when it comes to cultural background. We are struggling to trust each other and form relationships due to cultural differences. I want to investigate this issue because I think that it is something that becomes an issue with almost any virtual team due to all of the differences that each member has. People from different countries have certain ways of doing things or certain opinions about a subject matter that members from other countries do not agree with. The goal of this project is to offer recommendations to improve problems that arise from cultural differences between team members. This project will describe the factors that contribute to cultural differences and will determine ways of establishing relationships and communicating more effectively through research.

Background

Virtual teams in the technical writing industry have lots of benefits. When working with people in India, or in any other culture, we are getting ideas that we never would have thought of by ourselves. When combining two different cultures, multiple perspectives come into play and make for a greater project outcome. We also get the benefit of learning how to work with different cultures and completing work in a way that we may have never done before. These teams can give us insight into new ways of thinking, and that can be very important in the technical writing workplace.

Some challenges that virtual teams face in the technical writing industry are cultural differences, time zones, technological issues, and lack of communication. These issues can cause the team to struggle to get their work done and negatively impact the entire company. When working with people across the globe, team members struggle to find a good time to talk or wait

for responses. Technology can also affect the time of response if an error occurs. Furthermore, “communication is a critical factor for any team but particularly for virtual teams that are also culturally diverse,” (Verghese, 2008, p. 2). To get a project done right, effective communication is imperative.

If a group can find a way to communicate with each other about their goals and/or fears and learn to trust one another, then cultural differences will have less of a negative effect on the team. “Virtual teams need to spend extra time building trust because their normal communication channels do not facilitate normal, human forms of interaction,” (Dubberke, 2015, para. 6) which are necessary to fully get to know someone.

Benefits of investigating and resolving cultural differences with Indian teams are that these problems can diminish with proper help. Knowing more about this issue and conducting research will provide a solution that will benefit every team member.

Objectives

The objectives of this project are:

- To identify possible solutions to the problem of cultural differences when working with virtual teams.
- To discover why cultural differences are such a big problem.
- To discuss the impact cultural differences have on the company as a whole.
- To identify the importance, challenges, benefits, and other details of virtual teams.
- To explain why this issue is important to my audience and how it might affect them in the future.

Methodology

I plan to interview members of the team from each culture. I want to ask them about their culture, how they think the project is going, and what they want changed to make it better. Interviews are a great way to gather data as they allow the researcher to see how the other teammates are feeling. You can see if any problems are occurring that need fixing or see what kind of positive outcomes are resulting from teamwork. The two types of interviews are in-depth and structured. Structured interviews have a set of questions that the interviewer is asking, while in-depth “interviews resemble a conversation more than an interview and are always thought to be a ‘controlled conversation,’” (Jamshed, 2014, para 4). After interviewing people from each culture, I can see how each culture feels about the project and can help them work out their differences and learn to respect others. Asking each member questions about their cultural background will also help each side understand the other more.

I will also perform an observational study of all the team members talking with each other to let me to see how members are behaving on a daily basis. Observations allow researchers to gather data without any manipulation. Observers can see what people are normally like and either confirm or change their previous thoughts. Being comfortable with the researcher will help this procese, for people are not going to be themselves in front of people they do not know. Observations are a good way to help with cultural differences because observing how each member acts on their own can determine what members are doing to cause cultural problems. If a group member from one culture is seen disrespecting a member of another culture, then we can determine that the group members are not building relationships or trusting each other and make changes based on this information.

I also plan to conduct a focus group so that we can see how members act with each other when they answer questions about the project and have to interact. Focus groups combine elements from both interviews and observations and observe interactions of group members. People sometimes also feel more comfortable in a focus group since they are in a group setting. However, some people are nervous to act like themselves in front of a group, causing results to be different than they should. Focus groups would help find a solution to cultural differences because by putting people together to ask them questions and see them interact, we can see why they are disagreeing or struggling to understand each other's point of view.

Conclusion

Cultural differences that arise when working with virtual teams can cause lots of issues. They can cause people to miss deadlines and just create an all-around negative work environment. When team members are not working together towards a common goal, the company is going to suffer. Furthermore, addressing this issue is important because we are now more aware and have possible ways of fixing the problem. I would like to begin research on this issue so that I can minimize the problems that occur due to cultural differences to better the workplace as a whole.

References

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