LESSON CONTENT TEMPLATE

Erasmus+	Project funded by: **Erasmus+ / Key Action 2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, Knowledge Alliances.**

1. **Lesson Document**

Lesson 4. Topic 7: Leadership

Tips for Leading Virtual Teams

Introduction

While all the principles learned in this topic about leadership do not change for virtual teams, there are added difficulties when participants are spread out across different geographies, or perhaps all participants live in the same area but some of the members work from home. In this case, communication is the key.

Once this lesson is completed and approved, learners will be able to:

1. Apply leadership recommendations to the virtual context.

In this lesson, we will learn more about the specifics of leading a teamwork on a remote mode, encouraging collaboration despite the distance.

1. **The fundamental factor in the success of virtual collaboration: People**

"The human factor remains the main obstacle for global virtual teams." It is the main conclusion of the study entitled "2018 Trends in High Performance: Global Virtual Teams." For virtual teams to work well, it is not important whether one person is in Brussels, another in London, two more in Vienna, and five in Warsaw, but how their work is organized, how expert those people are at their work and their team spirit.

Virtual meetings can be challenging for leadership. Being all together around a conference table, being able to make eye contact, talk with each other, and make a joke from time to time are traditional forms of relationships, and are familiar to work teams. Generally, virtual meetings are more complicated than those we do in person, even more so if the participants are from different countries and cultures.

Resource: Istockphoto

2. Tips to improve virtual team cooperation.

Team cooperation can be enhanced online. For this, you need to take care about some elements, such as the ones we present here.

-Communication
In virtual meetings it is especially important to enhance the communication. Is so easy to lose the attention of the participant, and to have a low participation than in physical meetings, it makes it easier for them to forget about their other teammates, live in their own world, do not pay attention, and end up not communicating or collaborating as much as they really need to. It is important to create effective ways of communication such as creating an open discussion to know all participants' opinions, to use the chat option to the call to ask for a turn to talk, write some impression to speak about when the person will have the turn to speak etc.

On the other hand, you can create a separate chat to interchange ideas when the virtual meeting is over and to have new questions to discuss in the next call.

-Build trust and encourage collaboration
As a leader you must try that team members should feel that, despite the distance between them, they can trust their colleagues and their work will be valued.

-Create opportunities to learn together
For the work of virtual teams to really bear fruit, you must get all the team members to be convinced and want to contribute their different experiences. Put a special emphasis on creating a positive atmosphere in which everyone gets used to contributing. Clear and transparent working structures must be created in which their contributions are recognized by others and opinions can be provided. Live

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surveys can also be done during the call, anonymous if necessary, to know the decision that is made on a matter.

<u>-Create rules and a clear calendar</u>
It is especially important to plan your time and your content if you plan to have interesting online meetings. As with conventional conferences the rule is "less is more", so prepare short meetings better than long ones, and set a short agenda.

<u>-Use tool to share screens during the virtual meeting</u>
With this, all participants could see the same info at the same time, and they can add new ideas and comments.

Furthermore, to be effective before and after the meeting, use other tools to work on team as drive to work all participants in the same document at the same time, adding comments to other partners etc, you can organize some specific hours to work taking in account the different time countries, put short and long term objectives to be completed by the team etc…

Conclusion

Working on distance might look challenging in the first place, even more when you are in the position of a leader that needs to motivate and engage your team in an effort despite not counting on face-to-face contacts. However nowadays technologies, if well used, offer us the capacity to be more flexible in our working places and reach high quality corporations, increasing our benefits now that we can count with contributions from people from almost all over the world.