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BACK TO BASICS

Sharing Goals And Developing Trust In Global Virtual Teams

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Abstract: There is a widely recognised view that trust is a vital requirement and a ‘need to have’ quality for effective virtual teams. Despite, however, this acknowledged importance of trust, only limited empirical research exists to date that explores the challenges of creating and developing trust relationships in the global business environment. This paper develops a theoretical framework for conceptualising trust development in this context by taking into account the role of shared goals and power dynamics. Based on data collected on eighteen global virtual teams, we challenge the prevailing assumption that global virtual team members experience swift trust. Within a business environment where conflict and power differentials prevail, building trust is not always a swift process. We find that the process of jointly constructing team goals holds significant value as it may provide the ‘glue’ to hold team members together long enough to enable trust development.

Keywords: Trust, goals, power, global virtual teams, computer-mediated communication.

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