

## **Abstract**

Knowledge is seen as a source of competitive advantage in organizations. The need to cater to global market places, competitive pressures and to avail the best resource possible has given rise to distributed form of working, which is further enabled by advances in technology. The prime advantage of distributed form of working is access to diverse sources of knowledge, and hence sharing of knowledge is a prerequisite for effective outcomes.

Distributed teamwork has several challenges, such as difficulty in coordinating work, lack of trust and dependence on technology enabled communication, since it is - not very effective for task and conflict resolution, as compared to face to face interactions. Yet distributed work is slowly becoming the preferred form of organizing. It thus becomes necessary to understand how organizations whose primary resource is knowledge apply and integrate distributed pockets of knowledge.

There exists little empirical research, which explores the nature of distributed form of working. Much work is focused on traditional team models, and uses student teams, which are different in nature as compared to organizational work teams in terms of availability of resources and the nature of task execution.

The purpose of this study is to understand the issues in knowledge sharing between members in distributed teams, and how does knowledge sharing impact the team performance in a distributed setting. This study aims to fill in the gap in literature on virtual/distributed teams, by identifying several team level constructs that impact the knowledge sharing process and subsequently the team performance.

The key contribution of this study is to view the knowledge sharing process in teams with respect to different dimensions of distributedness, jointly with cognitive and relational attributes of the team and the communication characteristics. Overall, results of this study indicate that team performance in distributed work setting is impacted by three main distribution characteristics, of distance, time zone, and no of sites, and task analyzability. All of these have positive effect on the communication extensiveness. The results also showed that relational capital plays an important role in determining team performance, and knowledge sharing among team members that are not co-located. An interesting insight which emerged was that when team are distributed across spatial and temporal boundaries, then the strategy to manage and share knowledge becomes significant in the knowledge sharing process. Also team timeliness is a strong predictor of team performance and client communication. Media usage norms are different for virtual team structures as compared to traditional team models and hence theory like media richness theory have little applicability in the context of distributed work using ICTs for task resolution.