

Online Communication in the Digital Age
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Lecture – 16
Virtual Teams and Virtual Presentations

Good morning, dear friends and welcome to this module. In the previous module, we had looked at the importance of teamwork and global considerations in digital communication. Today, we will talk about how information technology is providing the necessary infrastructure to support the development of new organizational forms. And virtual teams are an example of how the digital communication has revolutionized the workplace and organizations with unprecedented level of flexibility and responsiveness. We will also focus on the effective ways to convey information and persuade audience in the framework of digital communication through virtual presentations. The rapid development of new communication technologies has accelerated the use of virtual teams.

Virtual Teams

- Virtual teams are groups of geographically, organizationally or time **dispersed workers** brought together by information technologies to accomplish one or more organizational tasks.
- This was the result of increasing decentralization and globalization of work processes that further accelerated during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The common criteria for a team to be virtual are:
 - ✓ Geographically dispersed over
 - ✓ Driven by common purpose
 - ✓ Enabled by communication technologies
 - ✓ Involved in cross-boundary collaboration



Source: www.emorybusiness.com



Virtual teams are a groups of those employees or people who are associated with a common cause, but they are dispersed geographically and they have to be brought together with the help of information technologies to accomplish one or more than one organizational task. It was a result of increasing decentralization and globalization of the workforce. However, it was further accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The common criteria for a team to be virtual are that they should be geographically dispersed over, they should be driven by some common purpose, all of them should be enabled by communication technologies and they should be also involved in cross boundary collaboration.

Virtual communication is multifaceted and complex. For instance, a virtual team that wants to connect at the same time, although its virtual servers are located in different places of the globe, they use teleconference, video conference or instant messaging. While a team that wants to interact at different times could exchange emails, yet another team could use a chat room to interact. The basic types of virtual teams include parallel teams and project development teams. Let us have a look at each one of this.



Source: www.whirlpool.com

Parallel Teams carry out special tasks that the regular organization is not equipped to perform. It has distinct membership.

- Virtual Parallel Teams are mainly used by MNCs for recommendations.
 - **Whirlpool corporation** used Virtual Parallel teams for their customers.

Project Development Team

- Team members conduct projects for users for a specific period of time.
- Their results include a new product or information system.
- They make decisions and not just recommendations.
- The Project Team that created the new **Boeing 777**, was virtual.



Source: airlineratings.com

Project development teams are made for a specific purpose and they work only for a stipulated period of time. Their results normally include either a new product based on communication through information systems. The project development teams normally make decisions and also present some tangible outcomes and not just only recommendations. For example, the project team that had created the new Boeing 777 was virtual. In comparison, we find that parallel teams carry out a special tasks that the regular organization is not equipped to perform.

It has distinct membership and they are mainly used by MNCs for recommendations. A project team usually exists for a longer period of time and also has a charter to take tangible decisions. Their job description is not limited merely to make certain recommendations. More and more organizations are forming global virtual teams because of the advancements in technology as well as because of their interest in diversity. Therefore, it is important for us to understand how to start a virtual team with different cultural groups and with the help of different types of technologies.

Let us now look at the basic steps for starting a virtual team. The primary need is to get organizational support, of course, transparent funding and ICT support that is the support of the computers and information technology team.

- Every Virtual Team must have a **team charter** that includes the team's members, purpose, mission and goals.
- Virtual team leader must have a **technology-utilization plan** to select the appropriate use of Information technology that matches the task and type of team.
- Virtual teams establish **technology protocols** to facilitate two-way communication and to make the effective use of technology.
- Virtual team members must be competent in **coordinating and collaborating** with other members.



Source: www.nasscom.in

Every virtual team must have a team charter which must include clearly the purpose, the mission and the goals of this team as well as a clear understanding about who are going to be the team members. They must also have a technology utilization plan to select the appropriate use of information technology that matches the task and also the type and qualifications of team members. Virtual teams also establish technology protocols to facilitate two-way communication and its continuity over a passage of time to make the effective use of technological resources available to them.

Virtual team members must be competent in coordinating and collaborating with other members. Each virtual team needs to determine how it wants to work and then select the most complementary and cost-effective technology. Some technology is very convenient to use while others require sophisticated technology which has to be specially learned and we will discuss more on this when we talk about synchronous and asynchronous methods of communication. One of the main challenges faced by virtual teams is its ability or for that matter inability in crossing cultural boundaries.

Crossing Cultural Boundaries

- Geert Hofstede in his work *Cultures and Organizations* (1991) emphasizes that team members must be competent in crossing national, functional and organizational boundaries.
- National Culture- Include patterns that are established from childhood. This includes:
 - Power Distance: It shows the degree of inequity between the team leader and the other members.
 - Individualism-Collectivism: Virtual Teams prefer collective groups rather than individual approaches.
 - Masculinity-Femininity: It describes how a masculine orientation (concerned with earnings, success etc) has priority over feminine orientation (like nurturing, caring, cooperation etc).



Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory
Source: toolshero.com, www.iedunote.com



In this context, I would refer to the 1991 work of Hofstede who has emphasized that team members must be competent in crossing national, functional and organizational boundaries.

He has spoken about what are the characteristics of national culture and also the manner in which it is learned and becomes a part of the personality of the employees of any team. The national culture includes patterns that are established right from one's childhood. Now this perception of individual national cultures is also manifest in the way the power distance takes place, the way we have to look at the idea of individualism versus collectivism and also what type of gender perception different team members have. What do we mean by power distance? The concept of power distance shows the inequity between the team leader and other members and to what extent the other team members feel safe in sharing their ideas, particularly ideas of difference with the team leader. So, the idea of individualism versus collectivism takes the stand whether the team prefers to be taken as a collective entity, as a single collective entity or whether it prefers the individualism and how the credit is taken by different members of the teams.

Our gender sensitivity under different cultural parameters also makes our interaction either suitable or not. We will look at the concept of gender, influencing our online digital communication in detail in one of the later modules. As Hofstede has discussed,

power and gender are important national boundaries or cultural boundaries that must be taken into consideration. For example, certain countries like China are high power distance countries that accept that team leaders are the sole decision makers and the team members normally do not feel very comfortable in challenging or questioning their team leader. Similarly, implications for virtual teams also include differences in team unity, differences in closeness to other team members and the ways in which rewards and recognition are handled.

Now, let us look at the functional and organizational boundaries within virtual teams. To understand this further, I would refer to the Cameron and Quinn competing values culture model. This model identifies four different types of organizational cultures and they are hierarchy, clan, adhocracy and market. The vertical axis of this model looks at whether an organization is more focused on stability or flexibility and the horizontal axis looks at whether the organization is more inwards or outwards looking. The model is known as a competing values framework because it compares these competing priorities that organizations can have and these priorities also affect the manner in which the virtual teams are promoted and become functional.

- Organizational Culture** - is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as they solved external and internal problems and considers to be valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive.

Source: Medium.com

It is based on 'Competing Values Model' which suggests that every group has shared and competing values and assumptions.

Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn developed the idea of Competing Values Model
Source: positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu

- Functional Culture** - When members of a virtual team come from different functional areas, they bring different assumptions and practices that may affect the team.

We can understand organizational culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group has learnt as they gradually start solving external as well as internal problems

and consider certain solutions to be valid and therefore, these solutions, approaches and strategies are taught to new members as the correct way to perceive. The diagram on the left-hand side of this slide illustrates the ideas which we have already discussed. What do we mean by the functional culture? When members of a virtual team come from different functional areas, they bring different assumptions, practices and competencies that may affect the team performance. For example, mechanical engineers learn a different set of techniques for managing projects than the software designers do. In a virtual project team, these two groups may disagree about which approach is most appropriate.

Similarly, different organizational cultures carry different perceptions about the importance of time, their perceptions about punctuality, relationship to its competitive environment and theories about human nature. Let us take a case study in this context of a government research team in the US applying a technology intensive approach.

The Government Research Team- Case Study

- The Virtual Team's Task was to identify and assess the most promising new technologies to lower the cost of launching into space.
- They discussed space-propulsion technologies using desktop video, audio and a shared electronic whiteboard.
- The Virtual Research Center (VRC) had internet-based capability. The team used separate conference-call link as a backup during glitches in the audio.
- The video was turned off when the white board lost synchronization with the audio and the meeting proceeded with good results.
 - It demonstrated that the internet had to be robust to support bandwidth-heavy multimedia usage.



Source:www.suasnews.com



The task of this team was to identify and assess the most promising new and emerging technologies so that the cost of launching into space can be lowered. They discussed space propulsion technologies using desktop, video, audio and a shared electronic whiteboard. The virtual research center had internet-based capability and the team used

separate conference call link as a backup during glitches in the audio.

The video was turned off when the whiteboard lost synchronization with the audio and the meeting proceeded with good results. It demonstrated that the internet had to be robust to support bandwidth heavy multimedia usage. This case study shows that virtual team members must carefully assess the quality of the bandwidth as well as the desktop video or any other technological aspect which is needed for larger group discussions. We also notice in this case study that all the team members interacted at the same time and this interaction is termed as synchronous. The entire category of electronic options which are available to a virtual team is called groupware.

The groupware can be synchronous or asynchronous.

Technology and Virtual Teams

- **Synchronous groupware** enables team members to interact at the same time.
- This includes:
 - **Desktop and Real-Time Data Conferencing:** This frequently combines electronic chat with an electronic whiteboard that allows for the sketching of ideas. Its most advanced form is 'multipoint multimedia'.
 - **Electronic Meeting Systems:** It is used in face-to-face settings to increase the productivity of group deliberation. This requires special electronic meeting softwares. These are usually used for brainstorming, voting, polling etc.
 - **Electronic display:** This includes technologies that aid the communication like electronic whiteboards or flipcharts.

2. DESKTOP AND REAL-TIME CONFERENCING (ELECTRONIC CHAT).

	Generating Ideas and Plans and Collecting Data	Problems with Answers	Problems Without Answers	Negotiating Technical or Interpersonal Conflicts	Other Factors
Usefulness for Virtual Teams	●	●	○	○	
Good for	Brainstorming and generating ideas for plans, ideas about products, comments	Collecting data, discussing trends	Listing options, discussing options	Stating options	Low cost, easy to use, permanence, minimum technical support needed
Not so good for	Voting on ideas, prioritizing ideas, outlining	Organizing data, prioritizing data, displaying data	Debating options, voting on options, making decisions	Discussing options, reaching consensus, deciding among optional approaches, settling interpersonal disputes	Not suited for large groups, may require facilitation to maintain focus, low social presence

● = most useful ● = useful ○ = least useful

Advantages and Disadvantages of Real-Time Conferencing
Source: Deborah L Duarte

Synchronous groupware enables team members to interact at the same time. This includes desktop and real-time data conferencing, electronic meeting systems and electronic display. Desktop and real-time data conferencing frequently combines electronic chat with an electronic whiteboard that allows for the sketching of ideas. Its most advanced form is multi-point multimedia.

Electronic meeting systems are used in face-to-face settings to increase the productivity of group deliberation. This requires special electronic meeting softwares and these are usually used for brainstorming, voting, polling, etc. Electronic display includes technologies that aid the communication like electronic whiteboards or flip charts. On the right-hand side in the table, we find that the advantages and disadvantages of real-time conferencing are mentioned. Electronic meeting systems are compatible with other applications like word processing, spreadsheets, presentations and these allow team members to move back and forth from the work application.

Let us now also look at asynchronous groupware. Virtual teams do not always require face-to-face communications and they can also work in an asynchronous manner.

- Asynchronous groupware facilitates delayed interaction.
- The most common computer-mediated technology for distance collaboration is **e-mail**.
- **Electronic bulletin boards** and **Webpages** provide shared workspaces for non-real-time discussions and editing of documents.
- **Shared database system** is another asynchronous software that allows the management of large amounts of information and knowledge.
- **Workflow Applications** operate repetitive business processes that involve sequential steps like the electronic processing of forms in a loan application.

	Generating Ideas and Plans and Collecting Data	Problems with Answers	Problems Without Answers	Negotiating Technical or Interpersonal Conflicts	Other Factors
Usefulness for Virtual Teams	●	●	○	○	
Good for	Brainstorming, generating ideas for plans and ideas about products, commenting on products, collaborative authoring	Collecting data, discussing trends	Listing options	Stating opinions	Low cost, easy to use, permanence
Not so good for	Voting on ideas, prioritizing ideas	Organizing complex data, discussing and prioritizing data	Discussing or debating options, voting on options, prioritizing options, making decisions	Discussing opinions, reaching compromises, deciding among optional approaches	Little social presence, little information richness, requires cultural change to implement, may require training on special software

● = most useful ● = useful ○ = least useful

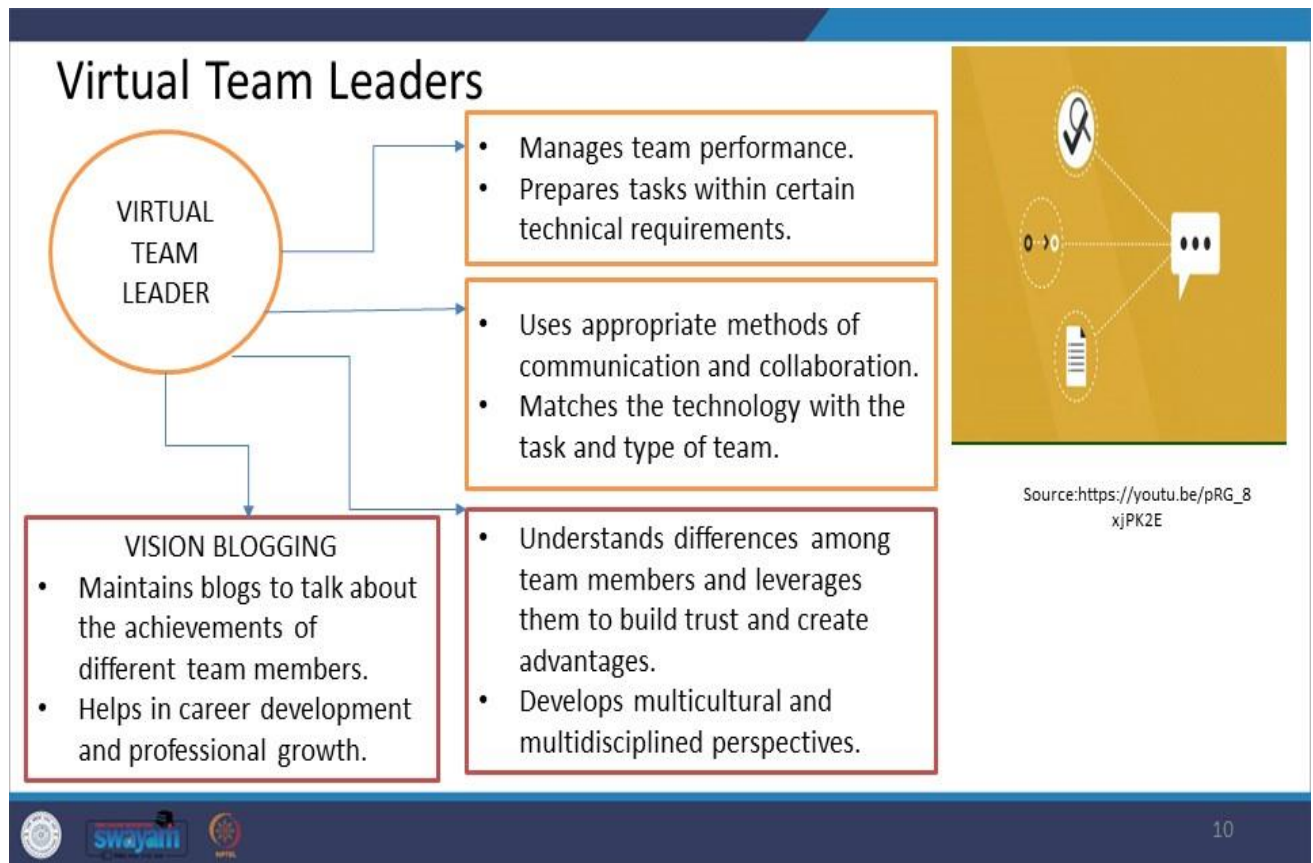
Uses and Disadvantages of Non Real-Time conferencing.

Source: Deborah L. Duarte

Asynchronous group wear facilitates delayed interaction and the commonest computer-mediated technology for distance collaboration is of course the email. Electronic bulletin boards and web pages provide shared work spaces for non-real-time discussions and editing of documents at a convenient time by different partners. A shared database system is another asynchronous software that allows the management of large amounts of information and knowledge.

Workflow applications operate repetitive business processes that involve sequential steps like the electronic processing of forms in a loan application. The table on the right-hand side describes the uses and disadvantages of non-real-time conferencing. Certain

other examples include electronic notebooks and calendars that simulate real calendars and notebooks. In order to facilitate these technologies and for virtual teams to succeed, the organization's leadership must establish a culture that values teamwork, communication, learning and capitalizing as far as diversity is concerned. Therefore, we need to understand the importance of the team leader in virtual teams.



As we can understand, the virtual team leader has several tasks to perform simultaneously. The team leader has to manage team performance, prepare tasks with certain technical requirements, also use appropriate methods of communication and collaboration to match every individual capability with the technology which can be used by the concerned person. Therefore, it requires that the team member must understand differences also which might exist among the team members and leverage them to build trust and create advantages for the team partnership. The team leader therefore must develop multicultural and multidisciplinary perspectives so that different group members feel convenient in interacting with each other. The virtual team leader also maintains blogs to talk about the achievements of different team members and helps in their career development and professional growth.




Virtual team leadership skills are a blend of traditional leadership skills and technological requirements. A leader cannot exclusively rely on technology to satisfy all of a team's productivity, communication and information sharing needs, but technology provides the critical link here. Let us try to understand at this stage the real-world application of virtual teams and we will analyze virtual integrated practice in brief known as VIP which uses virtual teams in primary care medical offices in the US.

Virtual Teams in Medical Care Delivery

- Virtual Integrated Practice (VIP) model uses virtual teams to improve chronic disease management in primary care medical offices.
- The VIP model organizes a virtual interdisciplinary collaborative team around a primary care practice.
 - Health care professionals from various disciplines are recruited as a team and linked to a selected primary care practice.
- Healthcare providers provide comprehensive and coordinated care to patients using virtual communication tools and electronic health records (EHRs).
- They use standardized processes like an automatic referral to a VIP team member for a clinical consultation triggered by an abnormal test result.

Virtual Health
Source: www.deloitte.com

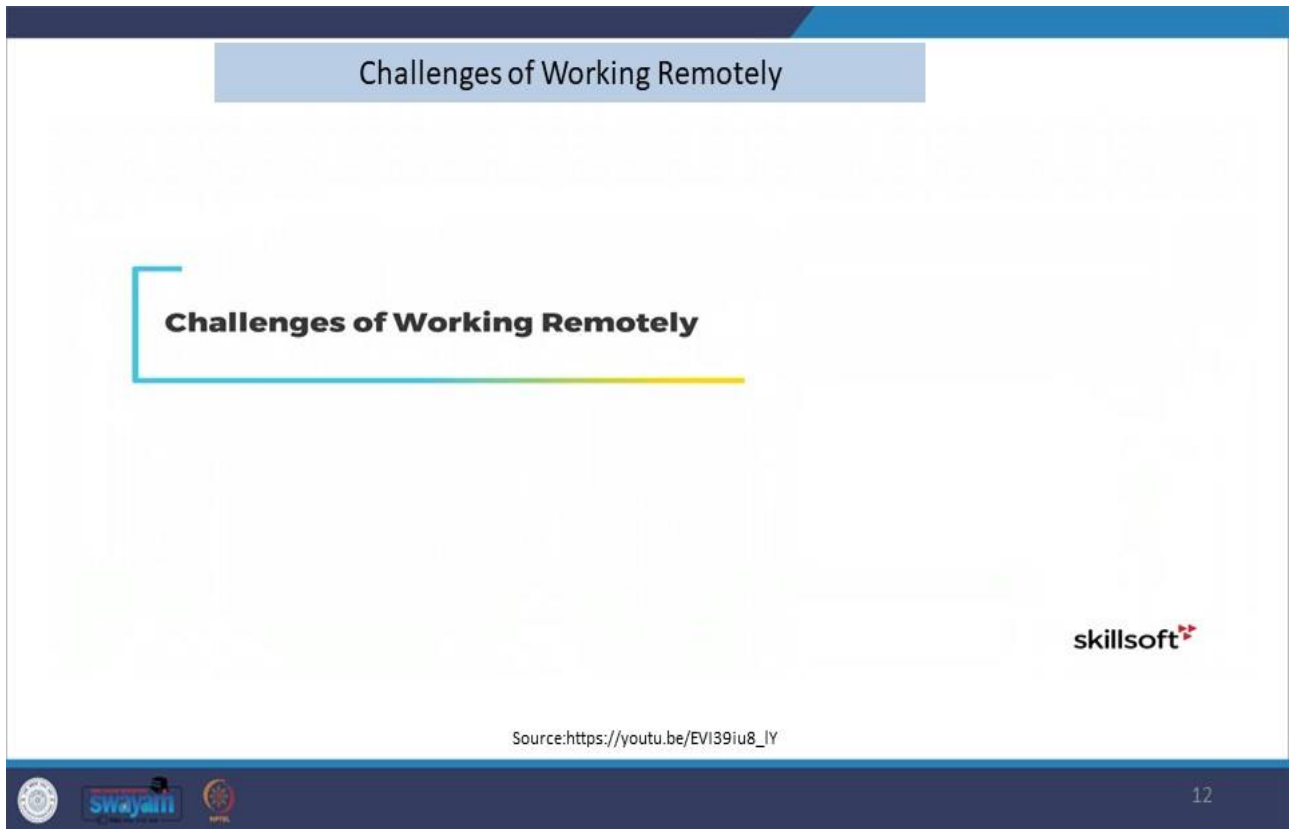

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The primary care medical offices use the VIP model in virtual teams to improve chronic disease management. This model organizes a virtual interdisciplinary collaborative team around a primary care practice.

For example, healthcare professionals from different specializations are recruited as a team and linked to a selected primary care practice. The healthcare providers provide comprehensive and coordinated care to patients using virtual communication tools and electronic health records. They use standardized processes like an automatic referral to a VIP team member for a clinical consultation triggered by an abnormal test result. For example, a VIP model was implemented for diabetic patients which may include regular checkups, medication management, dietary counseling and lifestyle coaching based on a predetermined or a pre-advised blood test. However, there are some limitations to virtual

teams which should never be overlooked.

Let us look at a video to understand how potential conflict miscommunication and sense of isolation pose as challenges while working through virtual teams and also how to avoid them.



Being on a virtual team and working remotely can present unique challenges that are not faced by team members who are collocated. Whether in another office location or at home, there are no managers or other teammates sitting nearby to consult with or provide immediate responses or support. Likewise, there's no one looking over your shoulder, keeping you focused and on task. One of the challenges then when working from home is managing the separation of work and home life.

Working from home has advantages. You generally have some freedom over your work times, making it easier to meet other demands on your time. You also don't have to waste time and money commuting. However, if there is no enforced 9 to 5 schedule, it can be hard to maintain a proper balance. Often, at-home workers end up either working too few hours or conversely putting in an unhealthy amount of overtime. It's essential to put boundaries in place.

The trick is to stay productive and minimize distractions as well as limiting the potential for overwork and burnout. For many, creating a designated work area is key to separating work and home life. Your workspace should have a clear physical boundary and your work should stay within that space. It should be a work area that's not susceptible to disruptions. If you don't have access to a suitable area at home, choose an appropriate external site, but one where you can avoid distractions.

Working in coffee shops, for example, may seem attractive, but a local library is probably a better choice. In either case, consider that working remotely nearly always requires an internet connection. Working virtually in a public place often mandates the requirement for VPN or similar secure connectivity. Whether working from home or a distant office, all virtual team members face the challenge of dealing with lack of everyday face-to-face communication and the team spirit that attends it. Working remotely, even in an otherwise busy office, can be isolating.

Virtual teams miss out on the informal everyday interactions that collocated teams often take for granted. Things like chatting in the break room and discussing problems on a coffee run. They miss out on nonverbal cues that indicate how their ideas and suggestions are being received. They can go days without contact, leading to feelings of isolation, and virtual employees who feel isolated are less likely to contribute to the team, eroding both team spirit and team trust. And this can be even more difficult by the challenges posed by cultural differences.

It is therefore important to maintain a balance, to cultivate strong relationships, and foster an inclusive team environment. We now use a range of modes, such as images, sound, and video, to convey meaning, and one of the most effective way to convey information and persuade audience in online communication is through virtual presentations. Virtual presentations are a particularly interesting example of digital rhetoric, as they involve the use of multiple digital tools and technologies like multimedia elements, such as slides, videos, and audio recordings, which are designed to convey information and engage the attention of the audience.

Virtual Presentations and Online Communication

- Virtual presentations are a form of online communication where a presenter delivers a message to an audience via the internet or other digital means, using multimedia tools such as slideshows, videos, and animations.
- These multimedia elements can be created using a variety of digital tools, such as presentation software, video editing software, and audio recording software.
- Virtual Presentations are designed to:
 - Inform
 - Instruct
 - Persuade



Source:https://youtube.com/shorts/2kb_qX1BHIV?feature=share



Virtual presentations are a form of collective communication, where a presenter delivers a message to an audience via the internet or other digital means, using multimedia tools, such as slideshows, videos, and animations. These multimedia elements can be created using a variety of digital tools, such as presentation software, video editing software, and audio recording software.

Virtual presentations are designed to inform, instruct, and persuade. For example, describing the safety requirements by any organization is an example of a presentation designed to inform the employees. Showing school going students how to obey safety rules is instructive, and we can also use virtual presentations to persuade. These presentations vary in style, complexity, and the levels of their formality. Let us look at the main advantages, as well as certain drawbacks in the context of virtual presentations.

In the early 90s and 2000s, technologies allowed individuals and groups to connect and communicate remotely, but they were often limited by low video and audio quality, high costs, and limited availability. Today, virtual presentations have become very flexible, allowing participants to attend and participate in the presentation from anywhere with an internet connection and without the need for travel. There are several advantages of virtual presentations.

Advantages of Virtual Presentations

- Flexibility
 - It allows presenters to reach a wider audience than might be possible with in-person events.
- Interactivity
 - Audience are not passive receivers of messages, but actively respond and participate for collaborative projects.
- Record and Playback
 - This can provide an opportunity for attendees to review the content and reinforce their learning.
- Improving Listening and Speaking Skills
 - For presenters, virtual presentations offer the opportunity to practice and refine their speaking skills in public forums.



Virtual Presentations gives more scope for Interactivity

Source: www.theceomagazine.com

It has a certain flexibility so that it allows the presenter to reach a wider audience than it is otherwise possible in a physical mode. It is also interactive, as audience are not passive receivers of messages, but they can respond through collaborative ways.

It is also a record for us, for other people to view, and also at the same time, we have the facility to keep it as a file and then have a playback whenever we require it. It also improves the listening and speaking skills. For example, the virtual presentations offer the opportunity to practice and refine their speaking skills in public forums. The feedback from the audience is valuable in refining the messages, adapting to instant changes and understanding their perspectives. Virtual presentations can also be recorded as we have seen earlier and therefore, we find that they are particularly helpful.


The YouTube video that you are watching just now is also an example of an online lecture that is pre-recorded and shared. We would understand that virtual communication is a give and take between the presenter and the audience. We can adjust the presentation on this spot and establish the pace and information flow, by observing the reaction of the audience. The audience can also use interactive features like chat rooms or Q&A sessions or comment boxes to promote engagement and share their thoughts to ask questions. While virtual presentations offer many advantages, there are also certain

potential drawbacks which we should consider.

Let us consider a few of the major disadvantages.

Drawbacks of Virtual Presentations

- **Technical Difficulties**
 - This includes poor internet connection, software compatibility issues, hardware malfunctions, and user error that can lead to delays in the presentation.
- **Unethical use of Digital Citizenship**
 - This includes disrespectful and inappropriate online communication, irresponsible use of technology and equipment, and violation of personal information and data.
- **Lack of Physical Presence**
 - It is difficult to replicate a level of interaction that can create a sense of community and connection in a virtual setting.
- **Distractions and Interruptions**
 - Audience may be more likely to lose focus and attention on the presentation itself.



Unethical Violation of Digital Citizenship
Source: agpartseducation.com


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One among them is the possibility of technical difficulties or the data gap. There are certain obvious technical difficulties. For example, the internet connection may be poor. There may be issues regarding the software compatibility, hardware malfunctioning and user error which lead to delay or non-sharing in the presentations. At the same time, we face the issue of unethical use of digital citizenship which includes disrespectful and inappropriate online communication and irresponsible use of technology and equipment and violation of personal information and data.

The absence of a physical presence sometimes makes it difficult for us to replicate a level of interaction that can create a sense of community and connection. There are certain distractions and interruptions also as audience are more likely to lose focus and attention to the presentation itself. And therefore, it is necessary that we follow online etiquette. We should use appropriate language and tone in chats or forums, refraining from sharing inappropriate content and respecting the privacy of other people as well as following the intellectual property rights. We shall discuss more on digital ethics and citizenship in the upcoming modules.




However, let us say that we can minimize this by trying to create a more engaging and interactive experience for audience. This can include incorporating interactive features such as quizzes, breakout sessions or even small talk and providing breaks to raise the eyes of the audience. Let us discuss now the essentials of planning virtual presentations. The significance of audience analysis and to choose the most appropriate delivery method are important.

Types of Presentations

- **Informative and Instructional Presentations**
 - These presentations are given at conferences, trainings or class lectures.
 - These are factual and impartial and clear about the sources and outcomes.
 - Visual slides are often used.

Source: www.linkedin.com
- **Persuasive Presentations**
 - They persuade, motivate people to take action or attempt to change opinion.
 - They use research and visual data like charts and graphs.
 - Often used in sales or business presentations.

Source: blog.hubspot.com

Presentations for professional communication are often done for informative and instructional purposes.

They provide facts and explanations or give instructions on how to perform a task. Informative and instructional presentations are given at conferences, trainings or class lectures. They are factual and impartial and clear about the sources and outcomes and they can also often use visual slides. On the other hand, persuasive presentations are often used in sales and business presentations. They try to persuade and motivate people to take a certain type of action and also try to see that they change their opinion about a particular product for example.

They also use research and visual data like charts and graphs in order to convince the audience. In persuasive presentations, we have to be well informed of different perspectives of the issue as we are ultimately promoting only a particular side of a

subject. The method of delivery therefore is also important. Impersonal speaking situations usually use an impromptu delivery.

Different Methods of Delivery

- **Scripted Delivery**

- You read material verbatim from a prepared script.
- Used for complex technical presentations like an online conference paper or a formal speech.

DELIVERY METHOD	MAIN USES	DRAWBACKS
SCRIPTED	Used in formal speeches with high technical content and for cross-cultural audiences.	Takes long time to prepare and makes working with visuals difficult.
EXTEMPORANEOUS	Used for familiar groups with moderately complex topics and flexible time limit.	Speaker might exceed time limit and can fumble with visuals and equipment.

- **Extemporaneous Delivery**

- This involves speaking without a prepared script, but still having a general outline or plan for the presentation.
- Uses a conversational style and is often projected as powerpoint slides with key ideas during the presentations.

Professional communication can use either scripted or extemporaneous delivery.

As we understand, a scripted delivery is one which is read from an already prepared text and it is used for complex technical presentations like an online conference paper or a highly formal speech. In comparison to that, an extemporaneous involves speaking without a prepared script but may still have a general outline or a plan for the presentation. It uses a style which is more conversational and sometimes or rather I would say often projected as PowerPoint slides with key ideas during the presentations. It is important to understand that virtual conferencing can take many forms, some of which are video conferencing, web conferencing, webinars, Skype, etc. But most of them make use of visuals to enhance engagement and to convey information and this is what we call visual rhetoric.

Visual Rhetoric and Virtual Presentations

- Visual rhetoric refers to the use of visual elements to persuade or communicate a message to an audience.
- It specifically focuses on the use of images, design, and other visual elements to convey a message or argument.
- The use of presentation slides, screen sharing, virtual whiteboards, and other visual aids can be seen as examples of visual rhetoric in virtual presentations.

VIRTUAL WHITEBOARDS

- Resembles physical whiteboards.
- Provides drawing and writing tools like pens and highlighters.
- Used in online education settings.

ONLINE VIDEO PLATFORMS

- Coordinated sound and visual images.
- Include Webinars and Skype.
- Delivers presentations via internet.

POWERPOINTS

- Incorporates text, images and sound.
- Provides wide range of design templates, themes and styles.
- Can create slideshows and can insert other multimedia.



Virtual Whiteboards and Powerpoint
Source: www.engadget.com, chrome.google.com

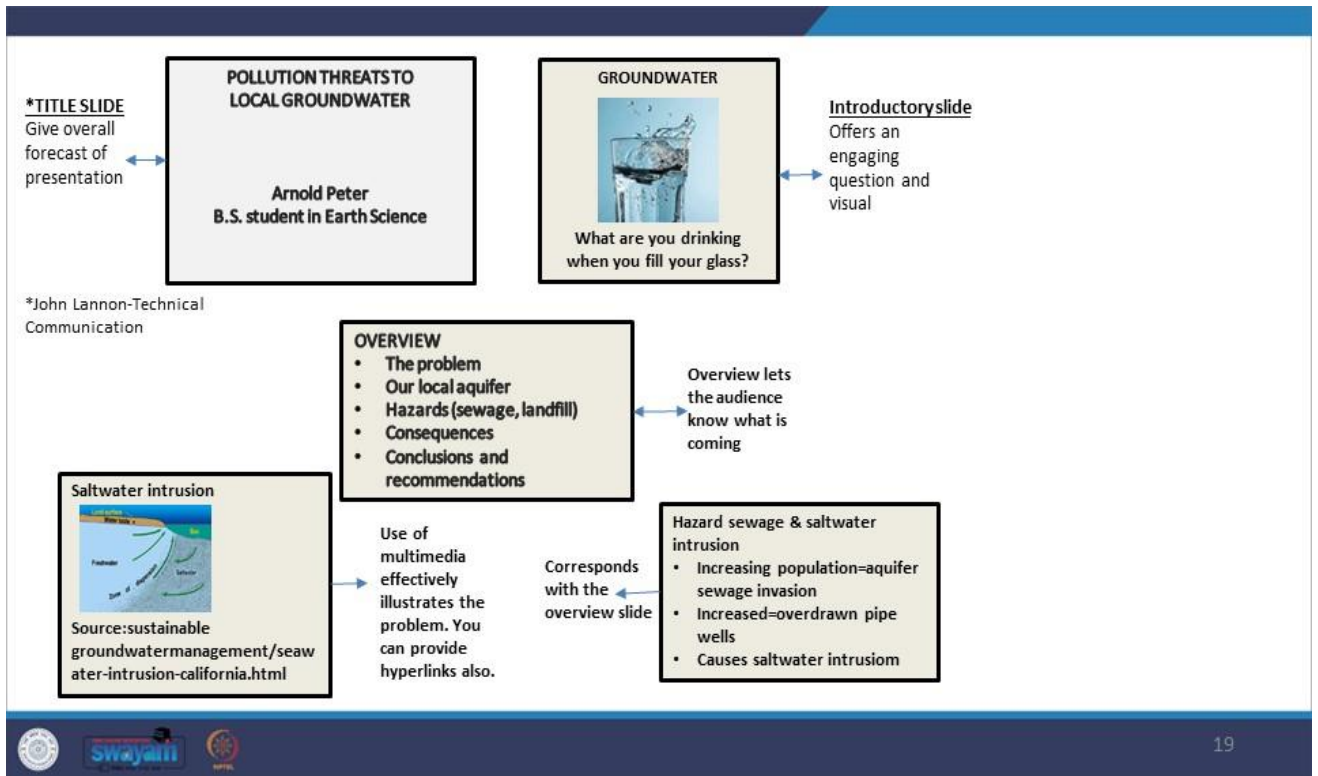
So visual rhetoric refers to the use of visual elements to persuade or to communicate a message to an audience. It focuses especially on the use of images, design and other visual elements to convey a message or argument. We can use presentation slides, screen sharing, virtual whiteboards or other visual aids for this purpose. Visual whiteboards are used normally in online educational settings and they resemble the physical boards.

Online video platforms deliver presentations via internet. They coordinate the sound and visual images. PowerPoints incorporate as all of us know text, image and sound and we can also create slide show and can insert other multimedia. As part of visual rhetoric in virtual presentations, such digital tools allow multiple users to collaborate on the same project. They can be accessed from anywhere making it an ideal for remote work as well as online learning.

Appropriate use of visuals enhances the engagement of the audience. The first essential thing to do is to choose the most appropriate visuals and to balance them with text. Remember that visuals are best suited to emphasize a point or any place where showing is more effective than telling. It is also connected with the eye movement and the gaze of the interactant in any online face to face communication, that is, where we are looking at each other. In the references, a link is also being mentioned for further references where you may find more information about it.



Let us examine the sample presentation for better understanding.



As we can look at different slides given over here, the title slide here gives an overall forecast of presentation. There is also an introductory slide which offers an engaging question as well as a visual so that we can understand the concept in a better manner. The overview also is given in detail in a point-wise manner using bullet points so that the audience know what is the extent of coverage. In another slide, we find that the use of multimedia effectively illustrates the problem and it is at this stage that we can also provide hyperlinks.

The next slide also corresponds with the overview slide. If we discuss it further, we find that two of these slides contain multimedia like images and hyperlinks. The photograph of a glass of water seen in slide 2 creates visual interest that would otherwise be all text. Similarly, the diagram in slide 4 provides a visual understanding of the key points made in the previous slide 5. We have to keep the right balance between text and visual and should not let the visuals overpower the research and purpose. Let us look at how we can ultimately deliver the presentation in an effective manner.

Delivering your Presentation

- Prepare your Presentation
 - Topic should be based on solid, credible and thorough research.
 - Outline the presentation with an introduction-body-conclusion format.
- Keep your listeners oriented
 - Know the audience before the presentation.
 - Open with a clear and engaging introduction.
- Manage your Style and Speaking
 - Be responsive to listener feedback.
 - Be Reasonable when handling sensitive topics.
 - Leave listeners with something to remember.



Source:www.sketchbubble.com



The primary precaution is to plan and prepare our presentation systematically by researching our topic, that is, the content which we intend to present. We should aim for simplicity and conciseness. Also try to anticipate possible questions by the audience and outline our presentation right in the beginning for the benefit of the audience. If the content is properly presented, we find that the organization of the presentation would also be better. At the same time, we should have some clearer and prior work as far as audience identification is concerned.

We should also manage our style and speaking by being responsive to the listener feedback and we should also be reasonable when we handle sensitive topics. We should also be able to handle our criticism with certain grace. We can also use what are known as ice breakers to attract the audience towards our topic and to maintain their attention. We can share a small anecdote, ask a question or refer to a current event, etc. We can also give concrete example as they have informative and persuasive elements in them.

The elements of our personal style like how you move, speak or look are not only

important in offline interactions but also in virtual platforms. As discussed earlier in online presentations, focus is on eyes, mouth, smile, pouting, etc. and the neckline, also the background which is visible to audience which is connotative. In one of the previous modules, we have already discussed this idea in detail. It means that we have to know how to manage the presentation style as well as your speaking situation by tuning into the reactions of the audience so that the listeners can better understand our perspective.

It is also important for online attendees to have a time specifically for question and answers to get inputs, feedbacks and to clear doubts. When we reach towards the conclusion of our online presentation, we should also try to summarize the major points which we have covered and also re-emphasize anything of special importance. Some type of repetition is also required as the old edit says, tell them, tell them that you are telling them and tell them that you have told them. You have to consider if you have given listeners anything to remember them. Let us watch a video by the Human Connection keynote speaker and broadcaster, Rias Meghji, talking about the basics to capture your virtual audience.



Source: <https://youtu.be/16xQbUEwa3g>

How to Capture your Virtual Audience?

Swajani NIPER

Start with story. I get this question a lot. When you start your presentation, should you ask a question off the top? Should you share a shocking statistic? I suggest start with

story. Make them feel something real right off the top. You want to hook them with an emotional roller coaster ride because the more real that you can be, the more real the experience will feel for your audience. You might be wondering, what story do you tell? Think about the questions the people in your audience are asking themselves. Right now, they might be asking, well, what am I going to do now? What's the first thing I'm going to do when isolation is over? How will I reinvent? You want to build your narrative around their priorities, not yours.

Fourth point, bypass the bystander effect. We've all been there. Diffusion of responsibility is a psychological phenomenon in which people are less likely to take action when in the presence of a large group of strangers. So, picture this, you're the speaker, you're in a Zoom chat, and you deliver a powerful story followed by a powerful question and then crickets. People are waiting for someone else to jump in. So, if you're the speaker and you have good relationships with some of your attendees, call on them by name to help avoid some of that dead air or have a few backup questions to ask to trigger some thoughts and ideas from your group so you can help bypass that bystander effect.

In a virtual setting, the goal is consistent engagement throughout. A popular technique for adaptive learning, the think, pair, share technique. Throw out the question, give the audience some time to think about it, then get your group to pair up in breakout rooms and have them share their thoughts. After, get them to report back in your main room. These engagement triggers are vital with virtual presentations. Try and hit them every seven to 10 minutes because the more actively involved the audience is, the more they will listen and take action after the presentation is over.

These ideas will make our virtual meetings more effective and we will feel more confident with our virtual presentation delivery.

Conclusion

- Organizations that are virtual and networked, link geographies while also respecting cultural, economic and legal realities.
- Online presentation platforms like 'Slideshare' have uploaded more than 10 million presentations from where you can access financial reports, data pulls, photo essays from organizations like NASA, IBM, Pfizer etc.
- Virtual teams and virtual presentations are becoming increasingly common in today's globalized and technology-driven world. Organizations must adapt and embrace new approaches to collaboration and communication.



So, we have discussed that organizations that are virtually networked link different geographies while also try to indicate differences regarding cultural, economic and legal realities of different members of the team. Online platforms like SlideShare have also uploaded more than 10 million presentations where we can access data pools, financial reports, photo essays from organizations like NASA, IBM and Pfizer, etc. Virtual teams and presentations are becoming increasingly common in today's globalized and technology driven world. We must adapt as an organization to it and embrace new approaches to collaboration and communication.

In the next module, we will be shifting the concept of digital communication to the writing process. We will look into the framework and processes of digital writing with the rising development of communication technologies. Thank you.