Case Study 10.1: Problem Solving in Virtual Teams

In the case study 10.1: Problem Solving in Virtual Teams (Scandura, 2019) the processes and procedures important to making the teams work is apparent in the virtual team at General Electric (GE). One of the most dramatic and widely adopted strategies in organizations has been the implementation of virtual teams which consist of geographically dispersed individuals with specialized skills, collaborating through information technologies, who are brought together to achieve a task and to cope with the realities of globalization (Powell, Piccoli, & Ives, 2004). Scandura (2019) presents such a team in case study 10.1 at the General Electric energy company.

Powell, et al. (2005) opine that given the obstacles with maintaining coordination in the virtual environment the processes and procedures of selecting effective leadership is a vital requirement for team success. While agreeing about the importance of the team leader on virtual teams, Martin, Gilson, and Maynard (2004) theorize that fundamentally, the role of leadership in facilitating group activity does not change in a virtual team. However, leadership needs to take on new dimensions to facilitate how the team deals with obstacles and how the team ultimately adapts to the unique challenges they face. After researching the various characteristics of leaders, Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1999) concluded that the transformational leadership style is best suited for the virtual team because there is a positive relationship between trust and transformational leadership. The transformational leadership style is found to be both active and productive, and by its inherent nature to manage more by trust than control would fit well for a virtual team.

Hackman and Morris (1975) and Saunders (2000) theorized a virtual team life

cycle model to view the factors important in the processes and procedures of virtual teams. The comprehensive theoretical framework examines the factors in the context of a team's life cycle as it moves through the three stages of Input, Process, and Output or Outcome.

Input represents the compositional procedures present at the time of a team's creation relative to team design, culture, training, and technology (Hackman & Morris, 1975). Scandura (2019) presents the scenario of a virtual team in several locations, trained in a specific role and job at GE. The team members share an understanding of member's role on the team. The team communicates by telephone, email, and occasional web meetings.

Process defines the dynamic variables that dictate group interaction including communications, leadership, trust, and cohesion (Martins, Gibson, & Maynard, 2004). Scandura's (2019) profile of Sheila and the additional two members of the three-person buyer team at GE presents a synergy among themselves and the team members in other locations. The syngergy reveals the trust and cohesiveness necessary for virtual teams to succeed (Bass, Avolio & Jung, 1993).

Output or Outcome refers to the performance of the team on the one hand, and the satisfaction of the team experience, on the other hand, measured by decision quality, time to complete specific tasks or projects, or end-results of the processes and procedures facilitated by the virtual team (Saunders, 2000). Observing Sheila's lack of success on a new team assignment through the Output or Outcome lens suggests the possibility that the team leader of Sheila's new team took for granted that Sheila's success on one team meant that she would automatically be successful on any team. There is the implication

by Sheila that the team leader failed to provide proper training, a vital procedure for team

success (2000), to Sheila before placing her on a new team.

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