Louvain School of Management

What are the key success factors that lead AIESEC global virtual teams to higher performance? AIESEC case study

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid business and markets globalization combined with the emergence of various information and communication technologies (ICTs) has led to new business and organizational models that take advantage of the different resources around the globe: raw materials, technologies, talents, … Global virtual teams (GVTs) are part of these changes. "Virtual" refers to those teams working remotely whose main activity is supported by electronic information and communication tools (Hertel et al., 2005). Today, GVTs are used by a majority of large organizations and many smaller ones as a means to enhance team performance (Dube & Marnewick, 2016; Ivanj & Bozon, 2016). Virtual teams allow organizations to benefit from talented people everywhere in the world and to decrease the time for decision making while saving travel and accommodation costs.

Nowadays in organizations, individuals do not necessarily share the same space and time to achieve their common objectives. Instead, they evolve in a virtual environment which corresponds to a geographical and time dispersion (Huang, 2011). Most virtual teams cooperate through ICTs with limited face-to-face interaction to achieve their goals. They assemble within a short period and display an exceptional level of flexibility and responsiveness (Powell et al., 2004). The type of goal and the lifetime of each GVT vary significantly.

The objective of this thesis is to identify the key success factors that lead GVT to higher performance. It is divided in two parts: the theoretical and the practical part.

The theoretical part is dedicated to an in-depth review of the literature. First, we evoke the context of Digital Revolution and Collaborative Revolution in which GVTs were created. Then, we synthetize the main factors identified as leading to higher performance. Finally, we point out the main challenges that GVTs face to improve their performance.

The practical part is a case study of an international student organization, AIESEC. The objective is to confirm or invalidate the impact of the different success factors on GVTs

performance. We start with a description of the organization, its vision & mission and its structure. Through a qualitative survey, we then identify the main challenges AIESEC leaders face when leading GVTs. Most importantly, we analyze to what extend the success factors identified in the literature have an impact on AIESEC GVTs performance. Our conclusion focuses on how AIESEC copes with these factors to address its specificities: the yearly renewal of all teams and the young age of its members. Finally, we propose suggestions for future research.

THEORETICAL PART:
THE LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Digital Revolution

The digital revolution took place in the 1980s and 1990s with the invention of the Internet. In less than a decade the Internet has become the means of communication which has grown the fastest until today. At the time, it revolutionized the world by its particularity to allow people not only to receive information but also to transmit information that is available to all.

The Internet is the part of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) which is experiencing real growth and is now an integral part of companies throughout the world. ICT tools are present in different forms: computers, softwares, Internet, data storage, telecommunications, etc.

The introduction of technological infrastructures has allowed companies to increase their capacity to store, retrieve, analyze and communicate information and data within the company itself or between the company and its partners, suppliers and final consumers. In recent years, ICTs have become an asset and even a competitive advantage as they increase business productivity, gain market share, help to better meet consumer expectations and reduce inefficiency (Shiu & Heshmati, 2006).

ICTs have changed the way we think, the way we live and the environment in which we live. The revolution in information and communication technologies is a key factor in globalization. Globalization does not only include financial markets but also includes social, political, economic and cultural changes. The global telecommunication system, with the convergence of computer and telecommunication technologies, offers a unique platform for international trade development. As a result, national borders between countries and continents become indistinct. Moreover, the capacity for exchanging and processing information is growing at an exceptional pace (Heshmati & Lee, 2009).

To get an idea of the expansion of ICTs, figures 1, 2 and 3 below show the diffusion of the Internet, mobile phones and personal computers, respectively, according to the World Bank classifications between 2000 and 2004. According to the graphs, taken up by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2000) and the World Bank (World Bank, 2006), the general diffusion of ICTs appears to increase year by year for all countries. However, the gap between low-income and high-income countries increases over time and can be explained by different language and technical skills and lack of access to these technological tools.

Figure 1: *The diffusion of Internet*
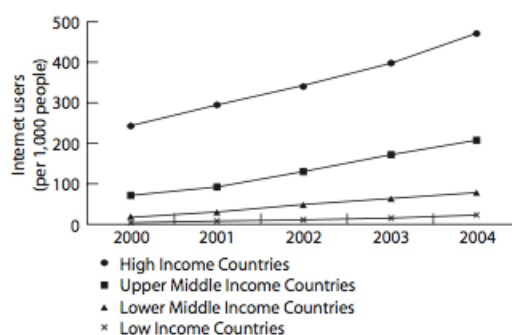
Source: OECD (2000), p. 630

Figure 2: *The diffusion of mobile phones*
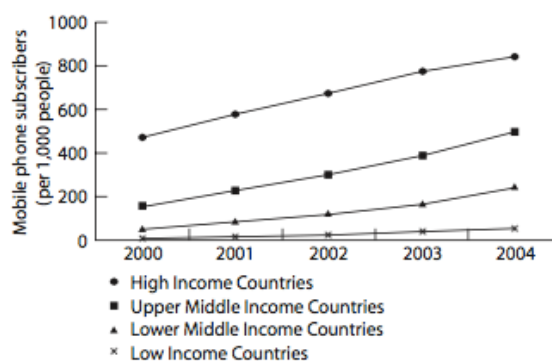
Source: OECD (2000), p. 630

Figure 3: *The diffusion of personal computers*
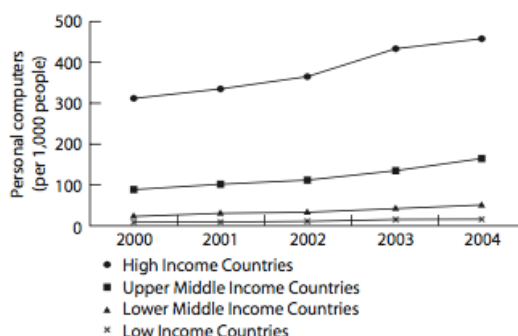
The ICT revolution has had an impact on the entire world but mainly on business. Indeed, new ICTs have shaped new forms of more agile, comprehensive, flexible and consumer-oriented structures. As a result, new procedures and processes have been adopted to increase productivity, quality and responsiveness (Brynjolfsson & Hitt, 2000; Litan & Rivlin, 2000). The latest advances in collaborative technology have helped to further transform organizations. In fact, due to the combined effect of globalization, growing competitiveness and the digital revolution, companies are increasingly outsourcing their activities and services. This impacts organizations and workspaces and implies new human resources strategies. The structure of a firm is changed and is characterized by rotation of tasks, learning through tasks (Lindbeck & Snower, 2000). In addition, studies have shown that workers are increasingly expected to display many skills such as teamwork, initiative and leadership (Murnane & Levy, 1996).

2. The Collaborative Revolution

The digital revolution has led to many technological evolutions. They are called the new information and communication technologies (NICTs) and have greatly contributed to growth and productivity of enterprises (Destais G. & Gillot-Chappaz, 2000; Askenazy, 2004). In addition to productivity gains, companies see their work organization change with the arrival of collaborative and virtual work. All functions of the firms are now modified and work organization is shaped by new technologies (Akoka, J. & Comyn-Wattiau I., 2006; Askenazy et al., 2006; Ettighoffer, 2001).

According to Wasson (2004), three overlapping phases could be identified:

-   1st phase: 1970 to 2000: the information system

- 2nd phase: 1990 to 2020: information becomes dematerialized
- 3rd phase: 2000 to ...: the emergence of virtual communication

Since the 2000's, we observe that spatiotemporal barriers progressively disappear thanks to new communication tools. Intra-company or company-to-business relations become increasingly remote with the emergence of virtual communication (Ettighoffer, 2001; Leon, 2008; Des Horts, 2008).

Virtualization of communication allows for ubiquitous, collaborative and virtual work (Silva & Ben Ali, 2010). First, work becomes ubiquitous, i.e., according to the Latin term "ubic" meaning "everywhere", the capacity for an enterprise to be present in different places simultaneously. Then, work becomes collaborative which is defined as "*peer-to-peer cooperation in a computerized or online environment by sharing skills to better achieve a common project*" (translated from the Office Québécois de la langue française, 2012). Indeed, companies set up technological communication tools such as videoconferencing, web conferencing to facilitate collaboration. Finally, work becomes virtual, people working in a different spatiotemporal workspace to achieve a common objective.

3. Global Virtual Teams

The objective of this chapter is to summarize the existing theory about global virtual teams, their characteristics and the key elements for successful remote team management from the GVT manager point of view.

Today, there is no doubt that the nature of work within organizations has changed. Over the last few decades business activity has become increasingly global and competition between local and foreign resources has increased sharply (Townsend, DeMarie, & Hendrickson, 1998). Advances in information and communication technology have largely contributed to this globalization and have created increasingly complex and dynamic workplaces. As a result, companies have had to modify their organizational structure and processes by making them more flexible and responsive. With technological advances, a new type of teams has appeared as the response to the need for flexibility and adaptation and are therefore becoming increasingly common practice (Bell et al., 2002). We have seen the emergence of virtual project

teams, also referred to as global project teams (Anantatmula & Thomas 2010; Hertel, Geister & Konradt 2005; Kirkman et al. 2004; Ludden & Ledwith 2014).

Since technological support for virtual teams and collaboration between dispersed teams are now viable and widespread, many companies decide to make use of these remote team management practices or, at least, strongly consider starting using them in a near future (Lipnack & Stamps, 1997; McDonough et al., 2001).

While virtual teams are a considerable benefit to businesses, implementing them involves several risks (see 3.c. Reasong for introducing GVTs) if the company does not take into account the team, communication processes, communication tools and socio-emotional factors in the specific context of virtuality (Iacono & Weisband, 1997; Victor & Stephens, 1994).

To better understand GVTs, it is first and foremost important to define the terms « teams », « virtual » and « global » to have an understanding of the topic in all aspects.

a) Definition

The distribution of work in different places and schedules is not a recent phenomenon. Indeed, there are many examples of collaborative remote practices that have existed for a long time (King & Frost 2002; O'Leary, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2002). Remote work has, over the past few decades, gained considerable ascendancy thanks to the rapid development of electronic information and advances in terms of means of communication.

Before defining the terms "global" and "virtual" in the concept of global virtual teams, it is important to understand the meaning of the term "team". In fact, the initial goal of virtual teams is teamwork. According to Cohen and Bailey (1997, p.241) a team "*is a group of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share the responsibilities of the results, who see themselves and are seen by others as an intact entity of integrated society and who manage their relationship across organizational boundaries*".

This definition covers, on the one hand, the traditional teams and the virtual teams and, on the other hand, it identifies the characteristics of a team in the broad sense:

- a goal to be united,

- an identity as a social structure,

- members sharing responsibilities for results.

As defined in the introduction, "virtual" refers to those teams working remotely whose main activity is supported by electronic information and communication tools (Hertel et al., 2005). The different forms of virtual collaboration depend on the number of people involved in the work but also on the degree of interaction between these people.

According to Kristof et al. (1995), a global virtual team is defined as being "*a temporary, culturally diverse, geographically dispersed, electronically communicating work group*" (see Figure 4). The term "temporary", which is included in the definition, describes teams that can have a limited lifespan. This means that members have probably never worked together before, they have no history in common, and they will probably not work together again as a group (Jarvenpaa & Ives, 1994; Lipnack & Stamps, 1997).

Finally, the word "global" in global virtual teams refers to cultural diversity and the worldwide team members that work in group in a diverse and universal environment (DeSanctis & Poole, 1997; Jackson et al, 1995). In the definition, global virtual teams rely seriously on technology and even more on information and communication technologies. This allows members to engage collaborative work despite different schedules and different workspaces.

According to Gibson and Cohen (2003), global virtual teams are depicted in four main characteristics:
- The group is considered as part of the organization and is working as a team;
- The team has responsibilities and has a strong decision-making power on the organization's strategy;
- The group uses computer-mediated technologies to interact with each other; and
- The members of the group work in different locations.

In the definition, we differentiate GVTs from face-to-face by the fact that global virtual teams are composed of people from different cultures, locations, functions, connecting members through the different departments of a company.

More recently, Edwards and Wilson (2004), defined global virtual teams as groups whose members work in collaboration for a common purpose but are disconnected by time or distance.

Figure 4: *The definition of a Global Virtual Team*
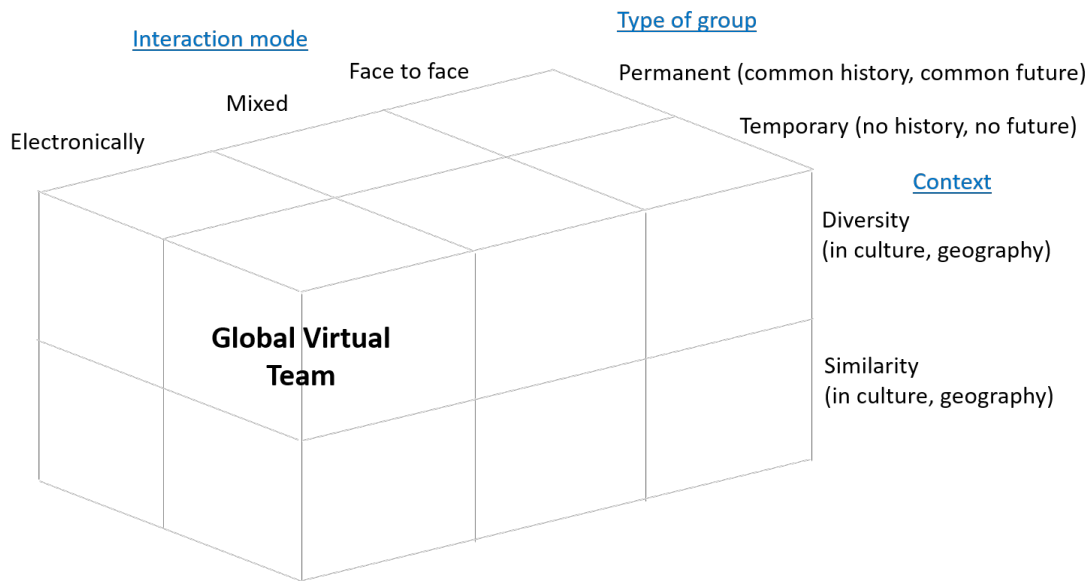
Source: Adapted from Jarvenpaa, S. & Leidner, D. (1998). Communication and trust in global virtual teams, *Organization Science,* Vol. 10, No. 6, pp. 791-815.

b) Types

When considering the different types of GVTs, we do not make the difference between global virtual teams and virtual teams as, apart from the cultural aspect of its members, they are very similar in their purpose and this does not alter the understanding on how they reach success. In this sense, we distinguish different types according to the way members are working:

      i.   Teleworking

     ii.   The freelance

    iii.   The virtual group and the virtual team

    iv.   Virtual communities

i.   Teleworking represents work that is done by employees partly or entirely outside the company's workspace through access to information and telecommunication services (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Konradt, Schmook, & Ma˙lecke, 2000).

ii.   A second type of work, that also implies virtual interactions, is that of the virtual freelance, or in other words the independent person working at distance. It is important to know that the theory of remote team management is very similar to that of freelancers because their

work style is similar (Wang, 2012). According to Wang (2012), a freelancer is an independent provider who works for other companies, its "clients". The freelance prospects his clientele, defines the mission and then realizes it, under his own responsibility.

iii. The virtual group and the virtual team, have at first sight the same meaning and functionality. However, it is called a virtual group when several teleworkers are grouped together and each of them reports his / her mission to the same supervisor. Unlike the virtual group, a virtual team is all members of the virtual group who work together to achieve a common goal (Lipnack & Stamps, 1997). According to Guzzo and Dickson (1996), the distinction between the virtual group and the virtual team can be assimilated to that between a group and a conventional team.

iv. The fifth and last type of virtual work is represented by virtual communities. These communities are the largest scattered entities whose members interact via the Internet and are guided by common objectives, roles and standards (Wellman, 1997). Unlike virtual teams, these virtual communities are not integrated into organizational structures but are, in most cases, created by their own members. Facebook, Google+, Wikipedia, My Space, open source software, and scientific collaborations are examples of virtual communities (Hertel, Niedner, & Herrman, 2003; Moon & Sproull 2002; Finholt 2002).

Moreover, we distinguish six other types of virtual teams that exist according to their aim:

- Networked teams consist of dispersed individuals or teams, belonging to a same or different organization, who collaborate to achieve a common goal.
- Parallel teams are composed of experts, from inside or outside the company, working in short term to provide recommendations.
- Project development teams are composed of members, selected for a specific expertise, that assemble, unite to achieve specific projects that are often out of their routine.
- Work/Production teams are teams that work on a regular basis in one function.
- Service teams provide a constant service across the world taking into account the different time zones.
- Action Teams activate immediate responses in case of emergency situations.

In our research, we will limit ourselves virtual teams (in terms of how members are working) and to networked teams (in terms of aim of the team) as these teams are the ones that come closest to global virtual teams. Indeed, as previously said, these GVTs are composed of members working across the globe to achieve a common goal.

c) Reasons for introducing GVTs

The introduction of global virtual teams did not take place overnight but is the result of a succession of phenomena of international scope. Indeed, 30 years ago, it was difficult to imagine that workers would be collaborating on multiple projects even though they were internationally dispersed (Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2002). However, nowadays, global virtual teams have become common practice among many organizations. According to a study conducted by Brenowitz (2003), regardless of the career path, it is very likely, with almost 100% probability, that a worker will be working remotely. A lot of companies claim that their success in their industry is due to the introduction of global virtual teams, for instance, Procter & Gamble, General Mills, General Motors (Moorhead & Griffin, 2012).

Many reasons have led global virtual teams to develop exponentially in recent years. First, globalization has played a crucial role in the introduction of new global virtual teams (Barkema, 2002; Bergiel et al., 2008). The growth of political, economic, socio-cultural interdependence, the trade liberalization, the phenomenal progress of ICTs has brought the term globalization worldwide (Karadagli, 2012). It has received many different definitions. However, we have decided to select only three of them that, within the framework of our work, are the most appreciated to understand the effect of globalization on GVTs. According to Szeman (2003), globalization is defined as "*an era of mass migration, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism*". Giddens (1990), defines globalization "*as the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa*". Finally, the Oxford English Dictionary defines globalization as "*the process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale*".

A second reason explaining the introduction of global virtual teams has been technological advances combined with the invention of the Internet (Bergiel et al., 2008; Hertel et al., 2005; Trzcieliński & Wypych-Żółtowska 2008). As previously mentioned, the digital revolution as well as the collaborative revolution facilitated global virtual teams to become an asset in its

own right for today's businesses. Many other reasons for introducing them will be translated into advantages hereafter.

Now that we have identified the main non-direct factors that have led global virtual teams to take part in the business world, it is important to understand the direct factors considered as advantages.

The main advantages when introducing global virtual teams are:

- **Cost and time savings**: it is considered as the biggest advantage for organizations. Thanks to the new technologies and the advanced communication practices, the expenses associated with travels, accommodation and daily allowances are drastically reduced (Bergiel et al., 2008; Minkin 2008). Organizations are now able to outsource their operations to the low-cost regions and benefit from a reduction of production costs associated with lower salaries, cheaper raw materials and lower operation costs.

- **Possibility to recruit global talented employees**: virtual teams allow organizations to recruit talented employees beyond their country of origin. Less and less employees are willing to travel for work because it is stressful and it leads to high costs (Joinson, 2002). Therefore, experienced, talented employees and specialists are brought together to work across the world on a project. For instance, if a director wants an expert in Marketing who is established overseas, it will be more interesting to make him work remotely instead of bringing him to the office. The hiring of new talented employees wouldn't be possible if organization had kept their initial face-to-face relationships as their way of doing business (Snyder, 2003). Moreover, as an employee working remotely can effortlessly work with different teams, his geographic location is no more considered as a team membership condition. The flexibility of this employee helps companies to maximize its human resources by using the skills of these talented employees for different teams (Hertel et al, 2005).

- **Knowledge sharing, creativity and originality among team members**: according to the second advantage, global virtual teams gather talented members from all around the globe together to work on a project. This allows companies to increase their innovation, creativity and knowledge sharing as these experts share their experience and understandings to achieve their final and common objective (Ale Ebrahim et al., 2009).

In comparison to traditional teams, virtual teams are composed of heterogeneous people. This diversity triggers, by consequence, creativity and originality among the team members.

- **Increased productivity:** virtual teams tend to be more task-oriented than traditional teams and also tend to have faster decision-making processes This improves the productivity of its members and of the team.

- **Newer and equal opportunities**: thanks to virtual teams, people who are less mobile and who are hesitating of being relocated for physical or family reasons, gain an easier access to job opportunity. Today, with the progress of ICTs, not all jobs require a presence on site. Virtual teams enable organizations to offer new opportunities for disadvantaged employees (Bergiel et al., 2008).

- **Ubiquitous, thus faster work:** as we already mentioned it in "The Collaborative Revolution" part, the progress of ICTs has allowed organizations to work efficiently in different zones at the same time. This allows companies to reduce their time to market. Indeed, when one member of the team stops working, another one, on the other side of the globe will start working on the same project. This reduces the time of project development but it also accelerates the response of organizations to their demand (Bergiel et al., 2008).

This list of advantages is not meant to be exhaustive. They represent the main reasons virtual teams have become very important in today's organizations, to the extent that "*over half of all professional employees are believed to work or have worked on a virtual team*" (Wakefield et al., 2008).

d) Differences between GVTs and face-to-face teams

Even though virtual teams and face-to-face teams use the same best practices, they are very different (Bergiel et al, 2008). Face-to-face teams, also known as traditional teams, conventional teams or co-located teams, have their specificities. After having defined global virtual teams, our next step is to compare them to conventional teams.

Two main characteristics appear when we distinguish virtual teams from traditional teams.

Figure 5: *Main factors that differentiate Virtual Teams from Conventional Teams*

Virtual Teams   **Conventional Teams**

Spatial Distance	Communication	Spatial Distance	Communication
Distributed	Technologically mediated	Proximal	Face-to-face
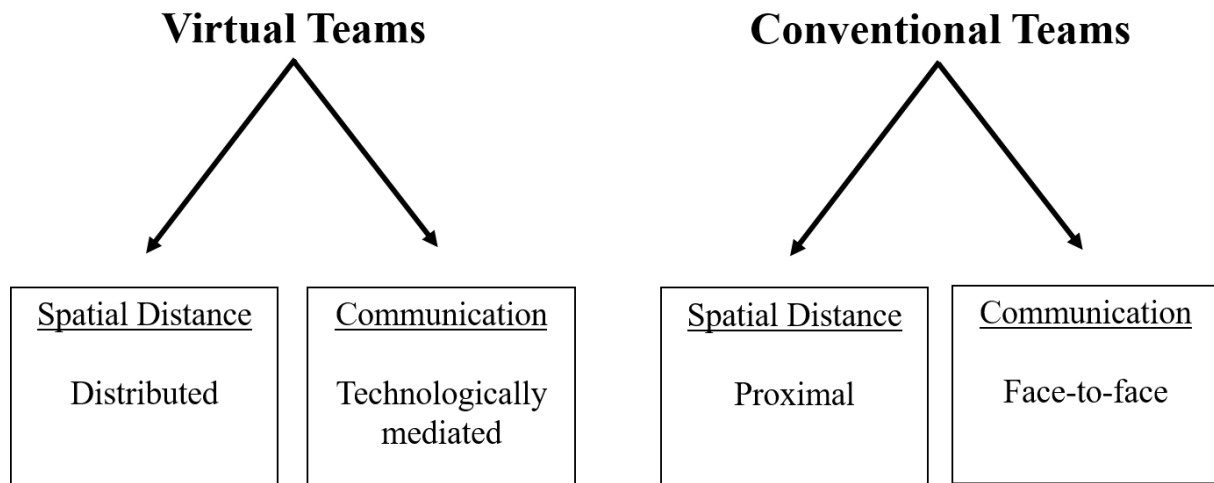
Source: adapted from Bell, B. S., & Kozlowski, S. W. (2002). A typology of virtual teams: Implications for effective leadership. *Group & Organization Management, 27*(1), 14-49.

The first and most relevant characteristic that distinguishes a virtual team from a traditional team is the **spatial distance**. Virtual teams are defined as having no boundaries of space. Virtual team members work separately from one and other, sometimes with an ocean between them. On the contrary, co-located teams work closely, in the same office or building. The distributed spatial distance that characterize virtual teams has consequences on team member's **communication**, the second main differentiating factor. Indeed, an employee working in Belgium with someone based in the U.S. will not interact in the same way as with someone in the same organization in Belgium. The employee working with someone remotely will interact through computer-mediated tools such as e-mail, video-conferences, instant messaging, phone calls, etc. In contrast, an employee working with someone in the same building will rather favor face-to-face interactions. However, even though conventional teams favor face-to-face communication, they also strongly rely on computer-mediated tools that help supplementing their work (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002).

Kratzer et al. (2005) also defined spatial distance and communication as two key differences between these teams and added a third one: **coordination**.
According to him, the coordination between members of a virtual team is less necessary than in traditional teams. Given the complexity of the environment, a set of rules must be established upfront to facilitate interactions in a structured way. The need for later coordination is therefore

less strong. In contrast, for traditional teams, intensive coordination is required permanently to capture the face-to-face interactions between the various team members.

In addition to these three differences, virtual teams can also be differentiated by the **selection of its team members**. Indeed, compared to traditional teams, members of virtual teams are not only selected for their functional skills but also for their social skills, such as ability to work across cultural boundaries, work discipline, strong capacity to counter isolation, the expertise of new technological means, self-management skills, and personal attributes such as interpersonal trust, intercultural sensitivity, autonomy (Rosen et al., 2006; Duarte & Snyder, 1999; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998; Konradt & Hertel, 2002).

Finally, the **leadership style** is different. A leader, working with remote teams, cannot be actively controlling every move of his employees on a daily basis due to the distance that separates him with them. Therefore, the manager adopts a different style by delegating his supervision to other leaders. The table below (see Figure 6) summarizes the main features that differentiate virtual teams from traditional teams.

Figure 6: *Main differences between GVTs and traditional teams*

Global Virtual Teams	Traditional Teams
Distributed spatial distance	Co-located spatial distance
Technology mediated communication	Face-to-face communication
Low coordination as their tasks are highly structured	High coordination
Member's selection based on basic functional skills and social skills	Member's selection based on functional skills
Manager delegates more	Manager has a control on his employees

e) GVT Life Cycle

As any organization or team, GVTs go through the different phases of a life cycle. At each phase, we will list the different challenges a manager faces and how he can overcome them. In

the next section, we will analyze the main challenges and key success factors of performance more deeply.

GVT life cycle consists of five chronological and essential phases to ensure its effectiveness (Hertel et al., 2005):

- Preparation
- Launch
- Performance management
- Team development
- Disbanding

i. PREPARATION

This phase consists of initiating the implementation of a virtual team and defining the purpose of the team. It includes people selection, task and reward system design, use of technology and integration within the company.

1) People selection and cultural differences

As previously said, one element that differentiates a traditional team from a global virtual team is the selection of its members. The manager selects his members based on their attributes of KSAs (Knowledge, Skills and Abilities): tele-cooperation, expertise of new technological means, self-management skills, interpersonal trust, intercultural sensitivity, self-reliance, etc. (Rosen et al., 2006; Duarte & Snyder, 1999; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1998; Konradt & Hertel, 2002).

The manager must also take into account the cultural diversity that will make up his team. Indeed, it appears that cultural differences sometimes lead to many obstacles (Abudi, 2014).

2) Virtual team design and tasks

For a manager, designing the team with a clear structure is a key responsibility that will enable the team to succeed. The manager will also define what tasks are best splitted among the different locations or concentrated in one place. This is important to reduce coordination efforts. (Hertel et al., 2005)

3) A reward system

Another element that a manager must take into account, during the initial phase of the virtual team, is the setting up of reward systems. The manager should put in place a system that rewards members based on their skills and not only on their job. This will encourage them to develop new skills (Lawler, 2003). In addition, he must reward collectivist behavior to motivate members to adopt a cooperative attitude. The creation of an impartial and motivating reward system is a key challenge at the beginning of virtual team. Similarly, to conventional teams, team-based incentives can enhance cooperation within VTs (Mukherjee et al, 2012).

4) Technology and tools

Today, we cannot imagine a collaborative structure without technological means that support information sharing between members working in a dispersed spatiotemporal environment (Constant, Sproull, & Kiesler, 1996; Powell et al., 2004). Studies indicate that an effective information and communication technology infrastructure is essential for the success of the enterprise and the stimulation of new opportunities (Alavi & Leidner 2001; Applegate et al., 2003; Zain, Kassim, & Moktar, 2003; Shin, 2007). In addition to an easy access to new technologies, members of a GVT should also be trained for its utilization. The reliability of these technologies is insufficient to reach efficacy. Team members also need to acquire the competences to use them. Shin (2007) has evidenced this by identifying a positive correlation between the efficient use of ICTs and the improvement of a company's performance.

ii.   LAUNCH

Once the preparation phase is completed, the manager must start the virtual team. It is highly recommended for the manager to bring his entire team together at the very beginning for a first face-to-face meeting (Powell et al., 2004). This will help to overcome some of the obstacles that could hinder the team's success, such as the cultural diversity in the team. This first kick-off meeting is also an opportunity for the manager to clarify the common objectives of the virtual team, the roles and functions of each member, to train members in the efficient use of technological communication tools (Konradt & Hertel, 2002; Konradt and Hoch, 2007). Following this meeting, the manager should see a clearer view of the communication processes, a beginning of a relationship of trust and an identification to the team (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999; Duarte & Snyder, 1999; Rocco, 1998). Therefore, it is important for the manager to develop strong relationships between global virtual team members at the very beginning. According to

Rapp et al. (2010), it is essential to build these strong relationships at an early stage as, in the later stages, the virtuality of the team will increase and, consequently, new challenges will arise. Trust, cohesion, membership are social aspects that a leader should first establish when launching a global virtual (Peters & Karren, 2009; Peters & Manz, 2007).

iii.   PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The third phase, the most important one, relates to performance evaluation within the virtual team as well as the maintenance of motivation and communication. At this point, the team has evolved and faces social and process concerns that require effective leadership capabilities. The role of the manager is crucial in virtual teams. He is responsible for giving his instructions to his team members to make them work efficiently and make them reach their objectives. This is more difficult when the team is globally dispersed (Leonard, 2011). The GVT manager operates through three different leadership styles based on members' autonomy: control, delegation and self-management (Hertel et al., 2005). This will be developed later in the chapter on key success factors.

iv.   THE TEAM DEVELOPMENT

The fourth stage, the team development stage, takes place via virtual team training. Trainings occur both during the creation of these teams to prevent any potential obstacle, but also later to review the concrete obstacles they face and learn how to overcome them (Hertel et al., 2005). In a virtual environment, it is difficult to organize trainings as ICTs do not always allow leaders to transmit effectively their socio-emotional thoughts (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999). However, it has been proven that trainings have a positive impact on the performance of the virtual team. They reinforce the cohesion, trust and commitment of all (Tan et al., 2000). The training of virtual teams generally relates to communication, technological tools usage, clarification of team roles, objectives and cultural differences (Saphiere, 1996; Brandl & Neyer, 2009; Rosen et al., 2006).

v.   DISBANDING

The disbanding stage of the lifecycle of GVTs appears when the project assembling members from different locations ends. This stage has long been neglected while it represents a key phase for the re-integration of team members and must be done carefully. Indeed, a cautious and productive disbanding facilitates members to quit their team and prepares them for a future re-

integration. During this phase, the manager should summarize the results achieved and improvements for the future (Hertel et al., 2005).

4. Challenges for GVTs

Before analyzing the factors that lead GVTs to success, we first review the multiple obstacles that a GVT faces when working in such a complex remote environment. The Economist Intelligence Unit (2009) completed a survey among 407 European executives from a range of industries and identified the main challenges (Figure 7).

Figure 7. *The Main Challenges of Virtual Team Management*
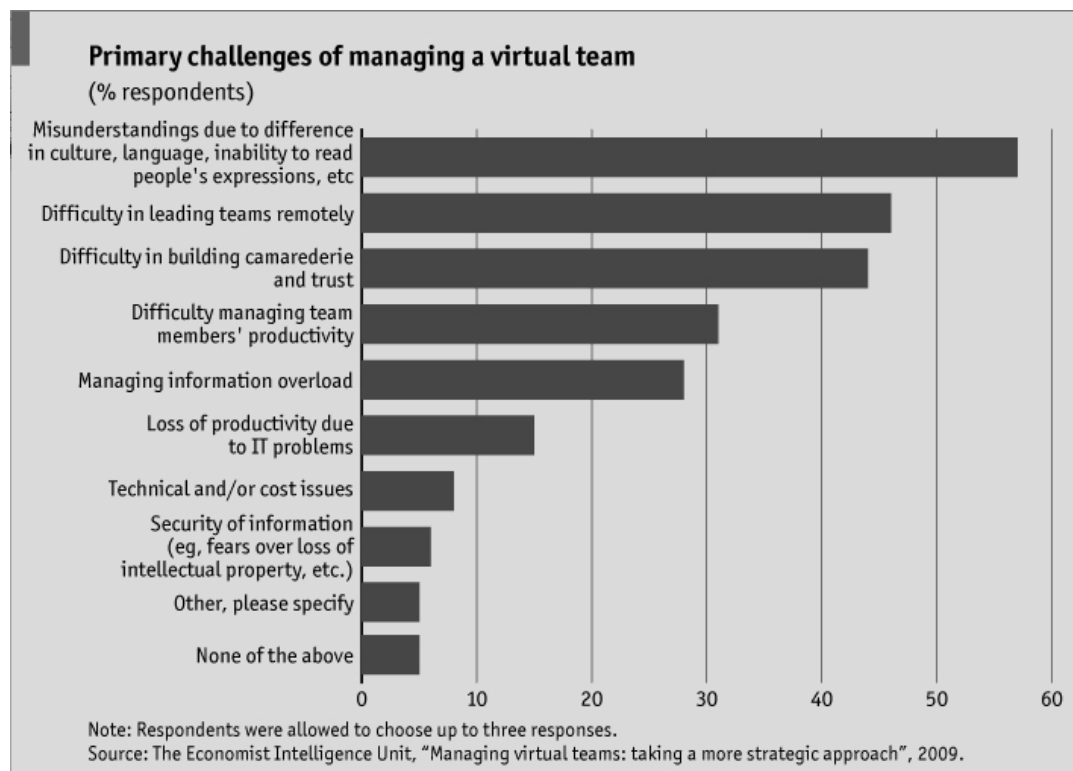
Source: Economist Intelligence Unit survey, October-November 2009.

These executives spontaneously stated issues relating to the following aspects.

Culture and Communication

Misunderstandings are declared as the first challenge. They may be due to differences in culture and to language but also to the simple fact that people collaborate in a remote way. In the

absence of face-to-face relationships, it can be hard for the team to develop a common language (Hosseini et al., 2013).

Leadership

Leadership is the second challenge stated by the participants. It is about leading remotely and managing the team members' productivity. The leader needs both technical and interpersonal skills but he must also adopt the right leadership strategies that fit to the team: communicating the vision, linking the GVT goal to the vision, influencing without using authority, etc. (Malhotra et al., 2007).

Trust and Social links

Trust and camaraderie come in third position. The absence of face-to-face contacts makes it difficult to establish the necessary level of informal relationships that is critical to build trust (Hosseini et al., 2013).

Technology

Technology is the next main challenge faced by the participants. In the absence of face-to-face interactions, GVTs substantially depend on ICT reliability. (Booth, 2011). In case of issues, the team is unable to continue the project in good conditions unlike in conventional teams. Furthermore, virtual team members can face difficulties using new ICTs and using the right ones (Hosseini et al., 2013; Hertel et al., 2005).

5. Key Success Factors for GVTs

The challenges identified in the above survey already highlight the main GVTs success factors. Our in-depth review of the literature has taken us a step further.

Many literatures have suggested different models representing the main success factors for global virtual teams. We decided to start from Shopee Dube's and Carl Marnewick's conceptual Model of 2016 (see Figure 8) as it is the most recent model that reproduces the main factors for a GVT's success.

Figure 8: *Key Success Factors for GVTs*
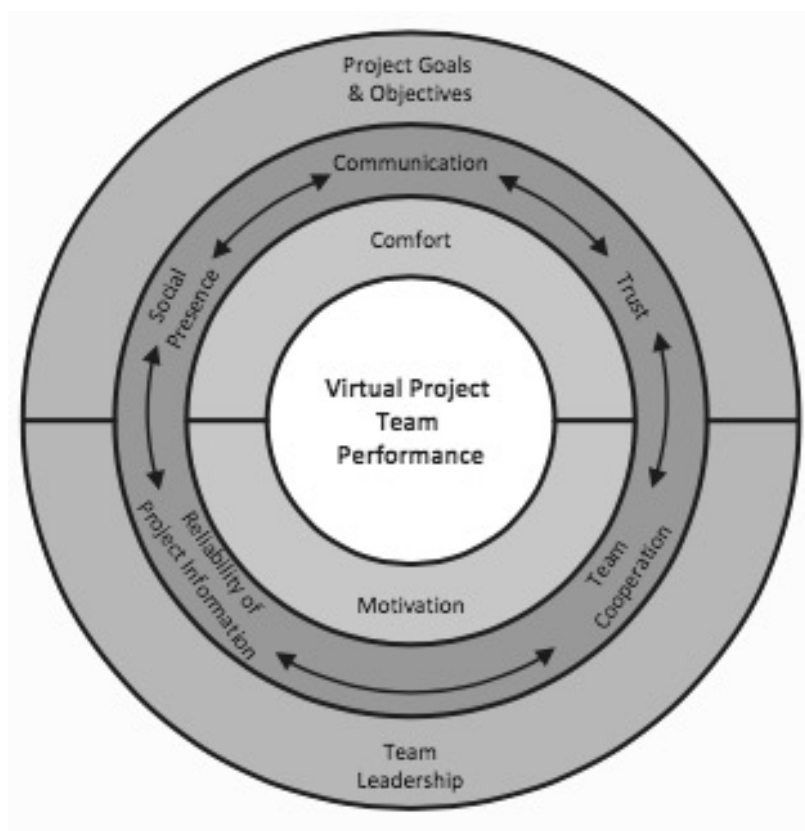
Source: Dube, S., & Marnewick, C. (2016). A conceptual model to improve performance in virtual teams: original research. *South African Journal of Information Management*, *18*(1), p.5.

This model takes up several factors that will influence the virtual team success: the comfort of a team member, motivation, communication, trust, social presence, reliability of project information, team operation, leadership and goal & objectives clarity.

Nevertheless, having reviewed the rather disparate literature on these success factors, we have decided to adapt the list of success factors, by grouping some concepts and adding new ones, namely culture and technology (Dinsmore & Cabanis-Brewin 2014; Ludden & Ledwith 2014). The seven resulting factors are: trust, culture, communication, social skills, mission and goal clarity, leadership and technology. Interestingly, apart from "mission and goal clarity", all these success factors were mentioned as the main GVT challenges in the Economist Intelligence Unit survey (2009).

a) Trust

Trust is considered as vital to the virtual team survival. Without trust, GVTs wouldn't perform and achieve the desired objectives. According to O'Hara-Devereaux and Johansen (1994), "*trust is the cement of global workspaces*". Managers affirm that trust is essential because teams are geographically dispersed and, thus, lack of face-to-face interactions that help members to build trust (Dube & Marnewick, 2016).

According to studies led by Meyerson, Weick and Kramer (1996), as time passes, trust builds up. In the case of new virtual teams, relationships are temporary: having common projects does not necessarily mean there is past or future collaboration beyond these projects. In these temporary relationships, time is an essential part of the process of establishing trust. This does not mean that trust is absent at the start of virtual teams. Actually, trust has been shown to be high at the beginning of the life cycle of virtual teams (McKnight et al., 1998). In addition, Jarvenpaa & Liedner (1998) argue that in new and temporary teams, trust is paramount and is articulated in the form of "swift trust". The swift trust model suggests that when there is little time to develop trust, team members decide to work as if trust has already been established by claiming that their colleagues are trustworthy. As can be seen in figure 9, swift trust intervenes during the launch phase (Tuckman, 1965; Gersick, 1989).

Figure 9. *The different forms of trust in the life cycle of a virtual team*

Figure 1   Type of trust required in team stages.

Source: Greenberg, P.S., Greenberg, R. H., & Antonucci, Y.L (2007). Creating and sustaining trust in virtual teams. Business Horizons, 50 (4), 325-333.

Once trust is installed, it is essential for the manager to maintain it to ensure team continuity. Studies have proven that when members trust their manager and their colleagues, they tend to give more feedbacks, share more information which, in fine, improves the team's performance (Dube & Marnewick, 2016).

According to Bell and Frey (2002), there are four pillars that build trust in a dispersed team:

- Dependability: the company knows how individuals will behave and is certain that these individuals will meet deadlines and meetings.
- Consistency: team members are treated with respect, processes are systematically applied and protocols are valid for everyone.
- Congruence: reality and perception are equal.
- Mutuality: individuals succeed because the team succeeds, the attitude adopted is "one for all and all for one".

Leaders must make sure they strengthen these four pillars to indirectly build trust. To do this, managers consider four elements, each of them will have a positive effect on one or more pillars of trust (see Figure 10):

- Competence: the manager must hire competent people to perform the requested task and avoid a loss of confidence in the ability of others.
- Personal integrity: the manager must ensure that the personal integrity of each member is respected, that is to ensure that the members hold their responsibilities, being involved in the company, respect the rules, etc.
- Transparency: the manager must give access to all information about the group (schedule, progress in the project, calendar, objectives, etc.).
- Commitment: the manager can strengthen the commitment of its members by setting up an effective feedback system, a reward system.

Figure 10. B*uilding trust in virtual teams: four pillars, four success factors*
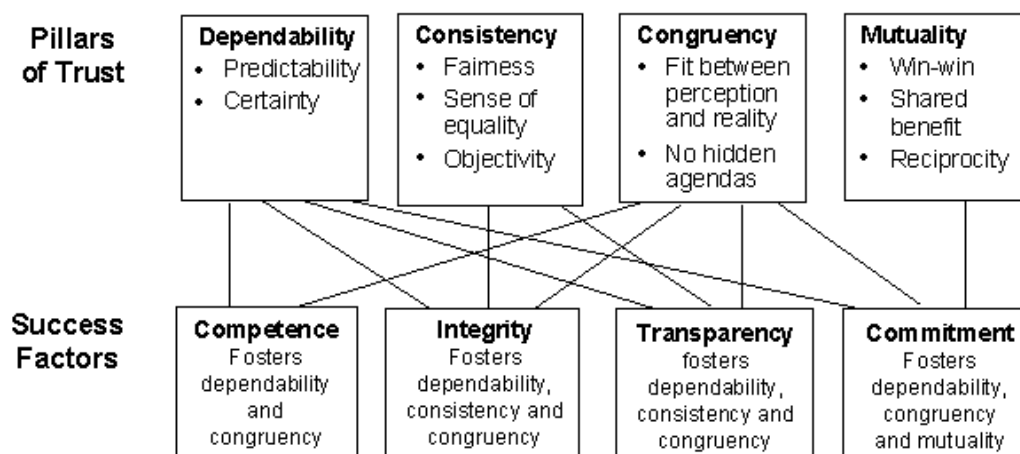
Sources: Gartner Research

As a consequence, when trust is established between the manager and team members, the performance of the global virtual team increases (Wise 2013).

b) Culture

Hofstede (1980) defined culture as "*the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others*".

More recently, Schein (2010) defined the term culture, according to its organizational aspect, as "*a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems*"

Thus, according to both definitions, culture is learned and can be expressed in different ways depending on the nationality or the organization. Cultural differences may lead to many obstacles (Abudi, 2014):
- Poor communication between team members
- Lack of understanding of other cultures
- Creation of stereotypes based on cultural identity
- Difficulty to adapt to other cultures
- Little involvement in the team

These issues can be strong as members of a global virtual team tend to filter their information through their cultural "lenses" (Solomon 1995).

Nevertheless, as GVTs are, by definition, dispersed teams working together despite their different cultural backgrounds, it is essential for a manager to use this cultural diversity as a strength rather than a weakness. The role of the manager is to foster these cultural understandings by introducing cultural trainings (Szewc, 2013).

The manager should initially organize a meeting in which future colleagues meet face-to-face or virtually and get to know each other, feel more comfortable with each other. He will organize activities to discover the cultural differences of each member. He will improve cohesion and collaboration among team members by letting them experience the different ways of working according to cultures (Hertel et al., 2005). Finally, the manager should establish collaborative

processes and procedures to facilitate communication and cohesion (Nunamaker et al., 1997). By dealing with cultural diversity in this way, the global virtual team will be more effective (Brandt et al., 2011).

c) Communication

The recent emergence of ICTs has made collaboration between members of different countries possible. ICT's have facilitated communication and knowledge sharing across the world. This to the extent that communication within virtual teams is now considered as a pillar by managers to ensure their proper functioning (Dube & Marnewick, 2016). Hulnick already stated in 2000 that "if technology is the foundation of virtual business relationships, then communication is the cement."

Iacono and Weisband (1997) defined communication as "*a social interaction and attention of two or more people. Communication is basically the transfer of information between a sender or receiver, and the sender or receiver could be either a person or device. The exchange of information among people could be through gestures, body language, songs or words. The information exchange using devices is by means of documents, videos, emails, blogs, forums, text messages, voice messages and other electronic devices*".

To overcome the different challenges associated with virtual collaboration (see Figure 7 above), the manager must establish common internal communication rules, set guidelines for the entire team, and ensure that each member understands his individual tasks and objectives, but also those of other members (Carlo, 2013). There is a positive correlation between clear internal communication rules that help members to understand what to do and increases in GVT effectiveness (Verburg et al., 2013). Indeed, many researchers have concluded that communication is a vital pillar that benefits from the constant evolution of ICTs to improve global virtual teams' effectiveness and capacity to achieve goals (Wise 2013).

Regarding interpersonal communication, it is important to develop social communication within the team. It has been proved by Saphiere (1996) that the most productive and most satisfied virtual teams use mostly social communication, that is, non-work-related communication. Social communication makes it possible, in part, to alleviate the problems of non-verbal communication. It is therefore advisable for the manager to organize regular

discussions in which all the members are present and sense of humor is actively used (Powell et al., 2004).

To have great results in a global virtual team, and display strong collaboration, team performance, trust and satisfactory interpersonal relationships, it is important that the manager communicates with his employees on a regular basis. Indeed, the efficiency of a GVT will mostly be initiated by strong communication skills of the manager who engages consistently discussions between members (Dube & Marnewick, 2016).

d) Social Skills

Next to technologies and processes, next to task management through leadership and communication, the manager must also take into account the socio-emotional dimension in his team management. Indeed, socio-emotional processes, ie. relationships building, trust (see section above), cohesion and motivation, have positive effects on the effectiveness of the global virtual team (Powell et al., 2004).

i. ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS

To ensure that virtual team members acquire a sense of belonging to the group and avoid social isolation, it is necessary for the manager to establish relationships between them. However, we found that virtual teams tend to be more work- and mission-oriented rather than social-oriented, unlike traditional teams. This is due to the fact that remote teams mainly use electronic communication tools (Powell et al., 2004). According to Hagerty et al. (1992), the sense of belonging is defined as *"the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment"*.

Therefore, when face-to-face meetings are possible, the manager should initially bring together all his team members so that they can meet each other and develop a first socio-emotional approach. However, when these meetings are not possible, it is advisable to adopt a social communication with members to strengthen the links (Robey et al., 2000). In fact, once a member of a GVT feels belonging to the team, the team's performance benefits from this. As a result, members feel more comfortable and no longer worry about their virtual environment. Being in their comfort zone allows them to focus on their goals and, thus, work more effectively which, in fine, improves global virtual teams' performance (Dube & Marnewick, 2016).

ii. COHESION

Pearce and Ravlin (1987) defined cohesion as "*the members' personal attraction to the team and the assigned task*". Team members work each on their task to meet common objectives. Nevertheless, in an environment where team members are scattered around the world, it is difficult to establish team cohesion because face-to-face meetings are limited. Once again, a pre-meeting or regular conversation sessions are good ways to increase team cohesion. It has been shown that there is a positive link between cohesion and performance and employee satisfaction. In fact, cohesion plays an important role in virtual teams because it improves the inter-help and the functioning of the group. Moreover, it develops over time when members share enough social information, that is, non-work-related information (Powell et al, 2004; Hertel et al., 2005).

iii. MOTIVATION

Motivation is defined as "*the level of excitement when one is working on a project activity at hand, or the drive which encourages team members to work in a virtual project team*" (Lurey & Raisinghani 2001; Sridhar *et al.* 2007). According to Peterson (2007), motivation is a personal feeling that is different from one person to another. When motivation is high, it positively influences members to work and reach their goals. There is a strong correlation between team members' motivation and team performance (Lurey & Raisinghani, 2001). Indeed, a member feeling discouraged by his work, by the virtual environment or by an uncomfortable situation will tend to perform less than a motivated GVT member. Therefore, motivation is considered as critical factor because of its effect on team performance (Peterson 2007).

For decades, several researchers have expressed theories about motivation within teams. McGregor's theory distinguishes two different theories: on the one hand, members of team need a continuous supervision by their manager as they are discouraged to work and on the other hand, members do not need a supervision as they motivate themselves through their intrinsic motivation (Peterson, 2007).

Another theory has been written by McClelland who declares that "*individual relationships are usually driven as team members are motivated to work, if the working environment is friendly and the members are willing to support project goals*" (Peterson, 2007).

Herzberg's theory is, for its part, based on hygiene or external factors that act as motivators or, on the contrary, as dissatisfaction in team members' relationships (Peterson, 2007).

The famous pyramid of Maslow (see Figure 11 below) establishes the primary needs human beings must satisfy to be motivated. Starting from the bottom, the physiological needs have to be satisfied before reaching the next level, up to the self-actualization needs (Dube & Marnewick, 2016).

Figure 11: *The pyramid of Maslow*
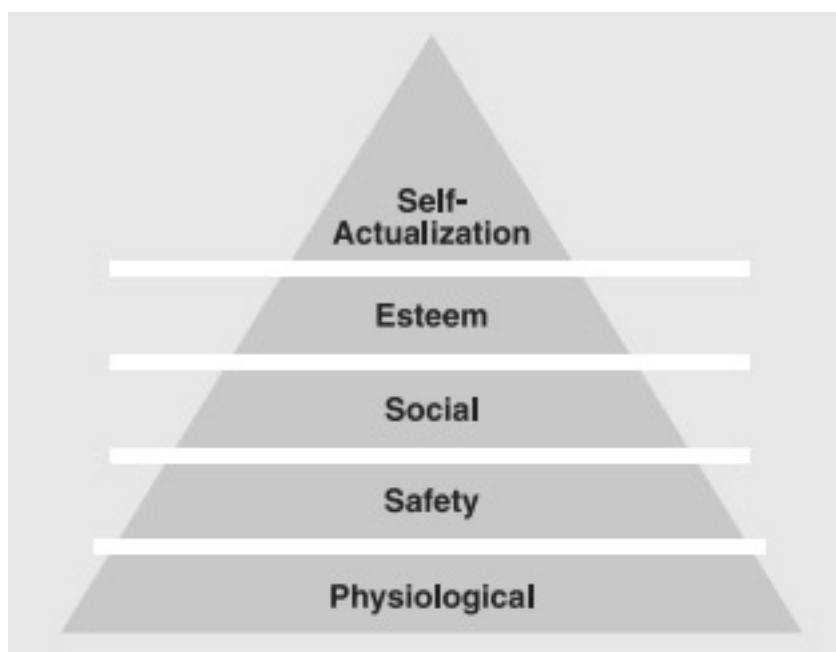
Source: Stum, D. L. (2001). Maslow revisited: Building the employee commitment pyramid. *Strategy & Leadership*, *29*(4), p.6.

According to researchers, a manager adopting an effective behavior, is a manager that motivates his employees to accomplish their objectives and constantly evolve to reach better results. To do so, it is important that the manager understands the motivation factors that drive team members to work harder and more effectively. The manager can use motivational incentives to keep his team motivated. Indeed, through a reward system, the manager will reward high performers and, to the contrary, alert low performers (Peterson, 2007).

e) Mission and goal clarity

As part of a successful communication behavior, GVT managers should clarify to the team the vision of the project, the goals and the expected results. Managers need to make sure their employees clearly understand the objectives to be able to develop the appropriate strategies. They have the responsibility to prepare their team to work effectively and pro-actively by setting clear goals.

Team goals can vary from one organization to another, from one mission to another, depending on the nature of the mission, laps of time available and difficulty of the project, and these need to be expressed by the project manager. According to Koster (2010), the longer the mission, the more challenging it will for the team to commit to the objectives. Therefore, it is the manager in charge of the mission that should show dedication, dutifulness, self-motivation to the mission to help his team achieving the desired team objectives.

In every organization, the team's goals must be clearly titled and explained to facilitate members to enhance team performance and final results (Michan & Rodger, 2000; Powell et al. 2004; Dube & Marnewick, 2016).

f) Leadership

The position of the manager is crucial in the virtual teams. Indeed, he will have to give his instructions so that his team works and reaches the results, but this is more difficult when his team is dispersed. There are three different types of leadership methods based on member's autonomy: electronic performance monitoring, delegation with management by objectives and self-managed teams (Morgeson et al., 2010).

First, the electronic monitoring method consists on performance recording of basic tasks, such as calculating the hours of connection to the company's intranet or the number of calls given to prospects, etc. However, this directive method is more about individual work than teamwork. In addition, directive leadership increases employee stress and reduces job satisfaction. It is therefore not interesting for a manager to adopt this type of leadership strategy for virtual teams (Morgeson et al., 2010).

Then, in a virtual context where the team manager does not have direct contact with its members, it seems wise to delegate some of his functions to his members. He manages by setting and reviewing objectives and is called upon to act as a coach and moderator. The method consists of establishing the roles, participation and reporting or feedback of the tasks performed or during execution. The importance of the manager, here, is to define the roles of everyone as this will have an impact on the performance of the team (Hertel, Konradt, & Orlikowski, 2003). Feedback must be regular and concise at the individual as well as collective level. It was demonstrated in 1996 by Shepherd, Briggs, Reinig, Yen and Nunamaker that a feedback on the tasks in progress improves individual and collective performance. Moreover, apart from the fact that feedback improves performance, it also promotes a relationship of trust between the manager and his employees. But it is also important for the manager to promote socio-emotional feedback that increases motivation, satisfaction and employee performance (Hertel et al., 2005; Powell et al., 2004)

Finally, in the case where the virtual team has great capacities to act autonomously, the leadership style of self-managed teams proves to be the most appropriate and also the most common method (Carte et al., 2006). Self-managed teams are characterized by "*a high degree of decision-making and autonomy and behavioral control at the level of the working group ... (such as) greater emphasis is placed on internal control rather than eternal control of the group*" (Manz & Sims, 1987). According to Pearce and Sims (2002), members of this type of team are capable and execute leadership roles that were later performed by managers. However, even though self-managed teams can even be considered as self-sufficient systems, most virtual teams still require support: a managerial support rather than only a simple electronic system. From now on, the manager is appointed by the superiors of the company and is a full member of the virtual team. He has a moderating role, which is to share information, organize meetings and organize communication with the parent company (Morgeson et al., 2010).

g) Technology and Tools

The first mention of technologies for virtual collaboration dates from the 19th century with the invention of the telegraph. Indeed, the first electronic network, created by Samuel Morse, allowed the world to interact virtually by sending messages over long distances and in record time. Kock (2005) highlights the different technologies that followed the invention of the

telegraph, namely, from the invention of the telephone by Alexander Graham Bell in 1870 to the launch of the World Wide Web project led by Tim Berners-Lee in 1989.

Today, in a digitized environment, it is no longer realistic to envision a collaborative structure without technological means that support information sharing between members working in a dispersed spatiotemporal environment (Powell et al., 2004). Studies indicate that an effective information and communication technology infrastructure is essential for the success of the enterprise and the stimulation of new opportunities (Shin, 2007). ICTs allow remote teams to collaborate and share information among employees, but also to establish and manage dispersed teams (Kirkman et al. 2004; Bhatt, Gupta & Kitchens, 2005; Lipnack & Stamps, 1997). Moreover, according to Shin (2007), there is a positive correlation between the efficient use of ICT and the improvement of a company's performance (Applegate et al., 2003, Zain, Kassim, & Moktar, 2003)

However, when we talk about virtual teams, it is more appropriate to talk about collaborative technologies. In fact, collaborative technologies are a subcategory of ICTs that facilitate the processing, storage, retrieval, transmission and management of data in geographically dispersed organizations. These technologies enable remote employees to perform tasks through information sharing, virtual collaboration, and coordination among members (Ngoma, 2013).

There are two types of collaborative technologies: synchronous and asynchronous technologies. Synchronous technologies allow instant communication while asynchronous technologies imply time lapse. Synchronous technologies, such as instant message exchange, whiteboards or conversations, tend to increase collaboration among members of a virtual team (Yu et al., 2009). Many scholars have for years attempted to establish a typology of collaborative technologies (Ellis et al., 1991; Nunamaker et al., 1997; Zigurs & Munkvold, 2006). Figure 12 shows the typology of synchronous and asynchronous computerized collaborative work systems and the time / place typology of collaborative systems.

Figure 12: *Time/Place Typology of Collaborative Systems*

	Synchronous (Same Time)	**Asynchronous (Different Time)**
Same Place	- Group Support System (GSS[1]) - Electronic meeting system	- Email - Document management system - Calendar and scheduling system - Workflow management system - Electronic bulletin board
Different Place	- Audio conferencing - Videoconferencing - Data conferencing - Instant messaging/ Chat room - Integrated team support technology - E-learning system	- E-mail - Distributed group support system des documents - Document management system - Calendar and scheduling system - Electronic bulletin board - Web-based team/project room - Integrated team support technology - E-learning system

From "Collaboration Technologies, Tasks, and Contexts: Evolution and Opportunity," by I. Zigurs and B. E. Munkvold. In Human–Computer Interaction and Management Information Systems: Applications, Advances in Management Information Systems (p. 146), by D. Galletta and P. Zhang (Eds.), 2006, Armonk, NY: Sharpe. Copyright 2006 by M. E. Sharpe, Inc.

The exponential growth of electronic technologies and telecommunications has led to major advances in virtual collaboration (Barner, 1998). These technologies were facing many challenges related to the virtual context but they have overcome the obstacles caused by distance (Davidow & Malone, 1992; Kankanhalli, Tan, & Wei, 2007; Kock, 2005; Wainfan & Davis, 2004). It is essential for each company to adapt its technology to its structure (Ellis et al., 1991). Indeed, it appears that inter-organizational collaborative performance is mainly due to the good selection and adoption of technological collaboration tools (Karsten, 1999).

In conclusion to these success factors, it is important to note the interdependence between these factors. Indeed, it is at the outset of effective communication that all other success factors can play a predominant role in the effectiveness of a virtual team. It has been confirmed that

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[1] Group Support Systems or GSS are computing environments that support collaborative and coordinated team effort to accomplish common tasks (Fjermestad & Hiltz, 2000; Nunamaker et al., 1996).

communication fosters trust, interpersonal communication, cultural diversity openness (Dube & Marnewick, 2016).

This interdependence can for example consisted in the relationship between communication and trust. Indeed, when the managers adopt an effective communication with his team members, this will lead to higher trust which, in turn, reduces uncertainty and improves information sharing and social presence. Conversely, higher social presence positively improves trust which improves communication in the team. Technologies, communication and culture are also interdependent: for instance, written communication by emails mitigates the negative consequences of cultural differences by making communication almost identical between members (Jarvenpaa & Liedner, 1998).

6. GVTs Performance Measurement

The success of global virtual teams is measured by their performance (Pinar et al., 2014). With the rising importance of teamwork, lots of studies have analyzed the criteria that organizations use to determine whether a team performs effectively or not. Despite this, there is still a lack of research giving the list of variables and the way they influence performance of GVTs (Algesheimer et al., 2011; Ebrahim et al., 2009). In the previous section, we have identified the 7 main factors that influence GVT performance. However, we must be careful that, in some environments, additional factors could play a role.

There are different definitions of performance. According to Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk and Schenk (2011), performance is *"the outcome of work activities which should be measurable"*. For his part, Katou (2008) defines it as *"the effectiveness, efficiency, development, satisfaction, innovation and quality"*. Most of the time, performance is calculated on the basis of the achievement of the desired goals (Dube & Marnewick, 2016). The Project Management Institute (2014) defined performance as *"observations and measurements identified during the project, e.g. the technical performance measures, actual expended cost, actual duration and percentage of work physically completed"*.

It is important to underline that the literature did not used the terms effectiveness and performance as synonyms (Hosseini et al., 2013). Instead, based on the definitions of Piccoli et

al (2004), effectiveness is defined as the quantity and the quality of the final outputs of the team, whether it is a product or a service, and the benefits that the team brings to its members. Thus, an effective global virtual team is a team that produces high quality outputs and offers satisfaction and gratification to its members (Jarvenpaa & Ives, 1994). In comparison, performance is defined as the level at which the products or services produced by the global virtual team meet the requirements of quality standards, quantity and speed (Martins & Schilpzand, 2011; Lurey & Raisinghani, 2001).

Consequently, according to Lin et al. (2008), "*performance is the cornerstone of GVT's effectiveness and is correlated with the satisfaction level of the stakeholders, end-users and members of GVTs*".

In GVTs, the performance is measured in three different levels (Hosseini et al., 2013):
- individual performance,
- team performance,
- (virtual) project team performance.

Individual performance is depending on the motivation of each member of the GVT and the directions and goals given by the manager (Rouillard, 2003). A manager calculates the individual performance based on the set of goals and expected results of the designated project. This performance is measured over the precedents weeks, months and years. To achieve great performance, the manager should ensure that the objectives are clear, that individuals perceive them as very important and that they are committed to them. To this end, the manager will also set a clear framework in which the individual can evolve, outline the requirements needed for the project, and give guidelines to reach the objectives (Hosseini et al., 2013). To track performance, a dialogue is essential between the team member and the project manager. It will allow the manager to stay informed about the progress of the individual and to guide him for improvements.

Team performance includes the performance of all the members collaborating on the same project (Kirkman & Mathieu 2007; PMI 2013; Schwalbe 2014). Every member collaborates with his colleagues to reach team objectives. In comparison to individual performance, team performance is more measured in relation to the vision and purpose of the organization (Buys

2010; PMI 2013). The project manager needs to set clear goals to allow members to understand the existence of the team. In addition to the individual goals, he has the responsibility to determine the collaborative outputs that must be achieved (Hosseini et al., 2013). Team performance is measured according to the results achieved through collaboration and coordination rather than individual interventions.

The third type of performance that can be evaluated is the project team performance, and more specifically, virtual project team performance. In this case, members of different teams collaborate during a defined period to accomplish a specific objective (Dube & Warnewick, 2016). Both individual and team work are crucial to enhance performance and productivity. The virtual aspect of GVTs does not alter the performance of the team. On the contrary, the team benefits from a wider selection of experts which have a knowledge of their local market and are usually multitask as they often work on different project simultaneously (Ludden & Ledwith 2014; Nader *et al.* 2009).

PRACTICAL PART:
THE AIESEC CASE STUDY

Through our literature review, we have shed the light on a recent and coveted phenomenon by all types of organizations, namely Global Virtual Teams. We have reviewed the main factors that lead Global Virtual Teams to higher performances: trust, culture, communication, social skills, mission & goal clarity, leadership and technology & tools. With this theory, we are now able to evaluate what factors apply to the organizations that build today's business and social world.

In our view, the study of a specific case seems to be the most appropriate way to answer our question. Indeed, according to Shell (1992), " *'What' questions usually suggest that exploratory research is indicated*". He added that "*a case study is an empirical inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used*".

The case study has proved its importance as a method of data collection for many management studies. It helps to answer research question within a complex environment influenced by many variables. This method has been, recently, more and more adopted by researches for its easiness to compare theory with specific cases (Shell, 1992; Mariotto, Zanni & Moraes, 2014).

Having chosen our research strategy, the case study, we have decided to analyze the case of the international student organization AIESEC (Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales). We will question whether the success factors for GVTs emitted by the theory are also considered as factors of success by the AIESEC organization. We have made the choice of AIESEC because it perfectly meets our search criteria. Indeed, our research concerns an organization with a global activity since it is active in more than 120 countries. Leaders of each country are in continuous contact throughout the world to realize their mission and have a strong practice of virtual work. The description of the

AIESEC organization will be given in chapter 3 of the practical part. We will now define our research question and justify our methodology.

1. Research questions

As we have seen, many researches about global virtual team management have been led these last decades as this remote work process has grown dramatically thanks to the world globalization and the advances in technology. While the attractiveness for global virtual teams is now clear, the right management style and practices to lead these teams to higher performance are still very hard to define (Ferrazzi, 2014). A few figures will highlight this. In 2001, Govindarajan and Gupta concluded that based on a study including 70 virtual teams, 82% of them did not reach their objectives and 33% considered themselves as underperforming. Moreover, in 2005, Deloitte affirmed that 66% of IT virtual groups could not satisfy their clients' needs (Ferrazzi, 2014).

More recently, in 2009, a study led by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) asserted that managers with great virtual team management skills can outperform conventional teams and thus improve the productivity of organizations up to 43% (Thompson & Caputo, 2009).

By consequence, the following question arises: How do you create and manage an effective global virtual team to reach performance?

Through our literature review, we have identified and analyzed the main factors that lead virtual teams to higher performance: trust, culture, communication, social skills, goal & mission clarity, leadership and technology & tools. On this basis, we will now review the AIESEC organization and ask the following questions.

How does AIESEC establish trust in its GVTs? How does AIESEC deal with a multicultural context in its GVTs? What are the communication procedures between virtual team members at AIESEC? How does social communication play a role in the success of AIESEC virtual team management? How does AIESEC establish relationships between members? How does AIESEC establish cohesion between members? How does AIESEC motivate its members? How do you make sure the mission is clearly understood? Which leadership style does AIESEC

use to lead its GVTs? Which tools and technologies does AIESEC use? How does AIESEC evaluate the performance of GVTs?

These questions will be answered through our practical part and can be summarized by the following final research question:

"What are the key success factors that lead AIESEC global virtual teams to higher performance? AIESEC case study"

2. Methodology

We will describe the scope of this case study, the overall research method, the data collection method and the analysis method.

a) Scope

Our research focuses on the AIESEC organization as an environment in which we can assess the impact of the success factors on GVT performance.
Inside the organization, we have decided to interview only members with GVT experience as leader or member. To ensure a good representation of the organization, we have selected people from all levels of the organization (global, national and local) and from various positions (geographic responsibilities and functional/support responsibilities) (see figure 13).

Figure 13: *List of interviewees*

	Position	Leading a GVT made of …	Member of a GVT led by …
Miron Lukac	Operation Support Team Nothern Europe	5 Support members based in different countries	-
Marco Dias	President UCL University (but based in Brazil)	7 local VP's based in Belgium	President Belgium
Jaouad El Azzouzi	President Belgium	9 Local (university) presidents based in Belgium	Global VP Europe

Karinna Calin	Global VP partnership development & account delivery	8 Support members based in different countries	-
Katarzyna Nabrdalik	Global VP Europe	GVT 1: 45 National Presidents based in different countries GVT 2: 5 Support members based in different countries	-
Daniel Bauman	Global VP Asia Pacific	GVT 1: 40 National Presidents based in different countries GVT 2: 5 Support members based in different countries	-
Mimi Vang	Operation Support Team for Talent Management Belgium	9 Local VP based in Belgium	Global VP Talent Management

An organigram is proposed in the section 3.a. "What is AIESEC organization?". The detailed profile of each interviewee can be found in the appendices.

b) Research method

- ### Qualitative research

Two types of research methods are most often used: qualitative and quantitative.

The difference between these two methods will be expressed through their following definition.

Marais (2012) defined qualitative research as a "*research that approaches phenomena from the perspective of the insider or subject to understanding the phenomena in their natural context. This approach uses qualitative 'indicators' such as words, stories, pictures and other communicative representations as non-numerical symbolic information on phenomena: its methodologies are normally less formalized, rigid, specific and explicated, but more comprehensively recorded.*"

And on the other hand, Marais (2012) defined quantitative research as a "*Research that approaches phenomena from the perspective of the outsider to explain and predict the phenomenon under study in isolation. This approach uses numerical indicators of abstract*

concepts; its methodology is normally relatively formalized, rigid, cross-referenced and explicated, but more parsimoniously recorded by means of statistics."

According to the definition, we have selected the qualitative method as this fits better to our research. Indeed, our objective is to better understand the phenomenon of global virtual teams in their natural context. Based on the theory of global virtual teams we will apply our finding to a specific case, AIESEC. This method is called the deductive reasoning as it *"is a theory testing process which commences with an established theory or generalization, and seeks to see if the theory applies to specific instances."* (Hyde, 2000, p.90). The deductive reasoning is frequently associated with a qualitative research (Hyde, 2000).

In addition to that, identifying the success factors of GVTs at AIESEC has never been addressed before. Therefore, our thesis leans more towards a descriptive and exploratory research which makes the use of a qualitative method much more appropriate.

c) Data collection method and method of analysis

- Semi structured interviews by Skype

For our literature review, we have collected information about global virtual teams in scientific articles published from various databases: Google Scholar, ProQuest, UCL online library.

For the practical part, the AIESEC case study, we have decided to conduct semi-structured interviews. Indeed, through this type of interview, the interviewer can collect information such as beliefs and opinions. Semi-structured interviews allow to gather information about our interviewees' experience and knowledge and to benefit from the description of processes (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). An interview guide (see appendix 1) was developed to conduct the interviews effectively and to address the different topics covered in the literature review.

Concretely, we conducted 7 formal interviews with GVT managers at AIESEC through the Skype application. The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. During the interviews, the objective was to identify and understand the success factors that lead AIESEC GVTs to higher performances, by intervening as little as possible.

- Website review

Before running these interviews, we also gathered information about AIESEC to understand the context in which these GVTs operate. On their global website[2] we analyzed the history, the mission, vision and activities, the key dimensions and the structure of the organization.

- Method of analysis

Finally, our method of analysis consisted in two steps. First, we segmented our notes taken for each interview according to the 7 factors identified in the literature review. This gave a clear view of what the interviewees had said about each factor. From there we were able to find common patterns and specific pratices on how AIESEC leaders manage GVTs to achieve higher performances.

3. AIESEC Case Study: Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques

a) What is AIESEC organization ?

AIESEC is an international non-political, non-governmental and non-profit organization that was created after World War II when a group of young people determined that cross-cultural understanding was essential to prevent conflicts. It is exclusively managed by students and recent graduates. AIESEC **mission** is to place their confidence in youth to become the leaders of tomorrow. AIESEC gives young people the key to make positive impact on the society. The vision is to strive for *"peace and fulfilment of humankind's potential[3]"*. AIESEC wants to open people's mind and make them understand the different cultures, religions and other aspects that differentiate humans to avoid conflicts. The aim is also to develop individuals who have the knowledge, skills and determination to develop a world with more respect of others. Concretely, to achieve this, AIESEC offers the opportunity to young people to develop their leadership and cross-cultural potential by experiencing global internships and volunteering programs.

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[2] http://aiesec.org/about-aiesec/
[3] http://aiesec.org/about-aiesec/mission/

AIESEC is an organization run by young people, for young people. The maximum age among senior positions is around 30 years, with a large majority of students around 20 years. It is considered as the largest student organization in the world with 70,000 members spread over 126 different countries and 2,400 universities. The number of AIESEC alumni exceeds 1,000,000. It produces more than 12,000 exchanges every year and has about 1,500 partners helping them proposing exchanges[4].

In terms of structure, AIESEC can almost be compared to a multinational company. The president is working with a Global Committee (GC) made of Global Vice Presidents: one for each region (Europe, Asia-Pacific, Americas and Middle East & Africa) and one per key function (marketing, finance, account delivery, information systems, partnership development, …). The Global Committee members oversee all operations and lead the accomplishment of the 5-year plan. They supervise Member Committees (MC) who are the Presidents and Vice Presidents of each country. Those supervise themselves the Local Committees (LC) which are the AIESEC structures at the university level. With more than 1900 LCs, they represent the largest amount of AIESEC members. They are responsible for the recruitment of new members and the delivery of internship and volunteering programs. The country and university levels benefit from the OST support : Operation Support Teams. These OSTs act as coach/consultant and bring their experience of a specific field (partnerships, account delivery, talent management, …) (Interview, M. Lukac, Appendix 2).

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[4] http://aiesec.org/

The figure below shows the organigram, with the name of the interviewed persons.

Figure 14 : *AIESEC organization chart*
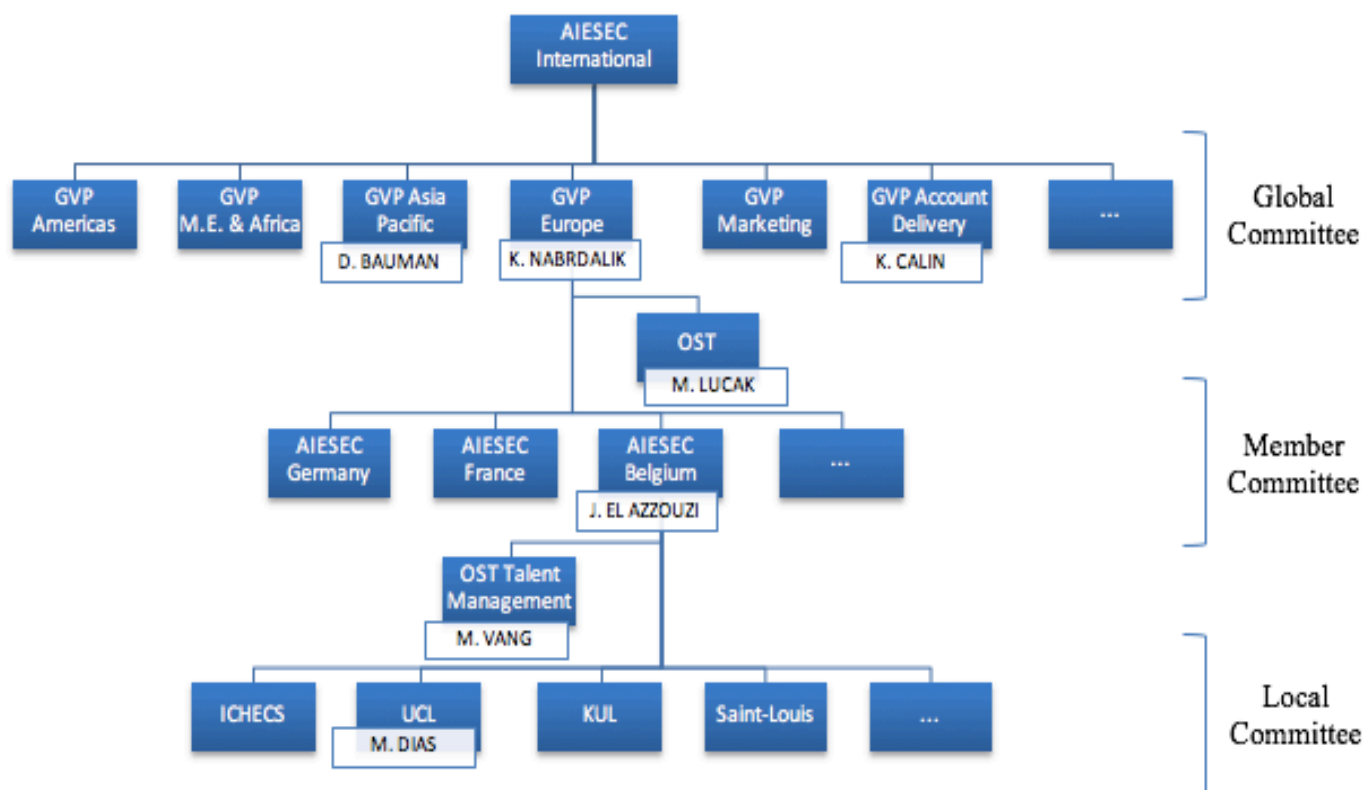
Source: Graph based on the interviews in Appendix 2-8 and AIESEC's website: http://aiesec.org/

Unlike the GC and the MC where members have a full-time paid job, LC members work voluntary while ending their university degrees: being part of the AIESEC allows them to build a first professional experience. They create business plans, run different talent strategies, deal with external stakeholders and coordinate with the MC and GC.

A final but very important characteristic of the AIESEC is that all teams are renewed every year through elections. AIESEC members of each university elect a Local Committee President. These LC presidents will elect their national president who will, in turn, elect the new Global President. We will see later that, this yearly renewal of the teams, combined with the young age of the member, presents challenges in the way GVTs are led.

b) Challenges for Global Virtual Teams of AIESEC

What are the challenges faced by the participants to our qualitative survey in dealing with GVTs? In our literature review we had identified the main challenges faced by executives from various industries. They related to culture and communication, leadership, trust and social links, and, finally, technology. AIESEC interviewees spontaneously state the same challenges except the social dimension. Interestingly, nor the executives from the industry nor the AIESEC members state "goal clarity" as a challenge. This is probably due to the fact that this factor is so important for any type of team that they do not mention it specifically for global virtual teams.

AIESEC members also added a very practical challenge to the list: the time zone differences.

Culture

AIESEC is a multinational organization that runs its activities all over the world, in more than 120 different countries. This means that people from different countries, different cultures interact between each other. The difficulty for the manager is to avoid cultural misunderstandings and cultural conflicts. In case people do not understand behaviors from specific culture, these people might not be able to communicate effectively between each other (Interview, J. El Azzouzi, Appendix 4). The biggest issues in dealing with culture at AIESEC are the ways of communication that people from different countries use. Whether the communication styles, direct or indirect for instance, or the communication channels differ from culture to culture (Interview, K. Nabrdalik, Appendix 6).

Leadership

At AIESEC, the managers of VTs face big challenges concerning their leadership style. They need to find the style that will lead the virtual team to success. This relates, in part, to the motivation of their team members. The loss of motivation and the feeling of isolation are issues that AIESEC VT leaders regularly face. People do not get to see each other every day and are sometimes obliged to work alone because of the virtual environment. Therefore, it is very difficult to maintain the motivation at work when you do not see the people you are collaborating with all the time (Interview, M. Lukac, Appendix 2).

Trust

Trust is harder to establish and to keep when communication is virtual and when you can not see your members all the time. By consequence, the absence of interaction and human connections create a lack of trust which is affecting a virtual team. Establishing tracking systems for human development is very difficult when you work at distance (Interview, K. Nabrdalik, Appendix 6).

Communication

Being a multinational organization, AIESEC uses English as common language to communicate. However, English is not always the mother tongue of each member. Therefore, some words can be misinterpreted and create misunderstandings. Moreover, face-to-face interactions are severely reduced or even absent when people work remotely. This may lead to a reduction of the written and verbal communication. Finally, people can be very competent and skillful but this does not mean that virtual communication is their strength. Virtual communication is a skill that is acquired over time and with experience (Interviews, M. Vang, M. Lukac Appendices 8 and 2).

Technology

At AIESEC, members of VTs generally interact with people from different countries. By consequence, they rely heavily on ICTs and even more on the Internet connection. Some AIESEC members work from places where technology is not flawless and the Internet connection unstable. These technological challenges can lead to frustration and delays that a manager wants to avoid (Interview, J. El Azzouzi, Appendix 4).

Time zones

Depending on the position in the organization, a manager of a VT can deal with more than 10 different time zones. Indeed, at AIESEC a regional manager, Asia Pacific for instance, leads 40 members, each working from a different country. This is for him a big challenge to manage people and to send his members communication in a way that everyone receives the information at the proper time (Interviews, K. Nabrdalik, M. Dias, Appendices 6 and 3)

c) Key Success Factors for AIESEC GVTs

In this section, we review to what extend each of the factors identified in the literature plays a role in the success of AIESEC GVTs.

i. TRUST

In AIESEC, trust is considered as a key factor and it is even more important when it concerns the management of GVTs. Indeed, VT leaders can not check regularly the work of their members: they do not know if they are delivering a good quality every day, if they arrive on time at their meetings, etc. Therefore, a strong basis of trust must be established within the virtual team (Interview, M. Vang, Appendix 8).

How to build trust?
In the organization, GVTs leaders agree to say that trust is mainly based on the **accountability** of people, whether past or present accountability. Trust starts when people know that their colleagues or members have achieved results in the past and have experience in specific field of activity. Leaders of VTs pay special attention to the resume and previous achievements of future members to make sure they can be trustworthy. In addition to that, AIESEC team leaders (MCPs, Regional leaders, LCPs) base trust on present actions. Indeed, the more AIESEC members show they are able to achieve short or long-term objectives, the stronger the trust will be (Interviews, M. Dias, K. Nabrdalik, Appendices 3 and 6). For example, Marco Dias, LCP of AIESEC Louvain-la-Neuve explained that when he started as a simple member at AIESEC, his vice president did not trust him to take the lead of negotiations with a possible new partner as he did not know him very well. Despite this, Marco decided to start talking with the partner which resulted into a great result and appreciation from the partner. From that moment, his vice president started trusting him because Marco had showed he was able to accomplish tasks (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3). However, with geographical distance that separates a team leader from his members, it is very difficult for him to look every single day if people are doing their job. That's why the team leader should develop an effective accountability system that helps him to track the performance of each person without being present every day. An effective

accountability system helps to improve trust between each other (Interview, K. Nabrdalik, Appendix 6).

In addition to being accountable, AIESEC team leaders instinctively identified the four success factors described in the literature review that help to foster trust. First, the **competence** of a member builds trust between him and his leader. By knowing that he is capable and skillful, the GVT leader can trust him without tracking him every day. Secondly, the **integrity** and the values that a member represents improves trust inside the team. Someone with low integrity will sooner or later be in contradiction with the organization that promotes strong values (see point iv. Values). However, someone who has strong competences but shows low integrity can not be trustworthy and conversely (Interview, K. Nabrdalik, Appendix 6). Thirdly, AIESEC members should be **transparent** in their work and make all the information accessible to their colleagues and leader. Working as a team requires people to be transparent so that trust can be established and to make things move forward. Lastly, the **commitment** of team members plays also an important role in building trust. The manager increases the commitments of his members by giving consistent feedback, whether positive or negative (Interview, K. Calin, Appendix 5).

In parallel to this, trust in AIESEC's virtual teams appears at the very beginning of the team life cycle and is called **'swift trust'**. However, AIESEC's team leaders face every year a new challenge to establish trust again as the leadership changes annually. Despite that, thanks to each local human resource department, new AIESEC members enter the organization with a very similar mindset to the other members. Even though people work from different places, they work better because they share similar values, they have the same vision, *"peace and fulfillmentent of humankind's potential"*. Therefore, virtual team leaders trust their members from the beginning because they are both driven by the same values and because they are part of the AIESEC community (Interviews, M. Lukac, K. Calin, J. El Azzouzi, Appendices 2, 5 and 4).

How to maintain trust?

Once trust is established, a new challenge arises for the team leader: how will he maintain trust inside the group? In response to that, different solutions exist according to AIESEC's GVT leaders.

First and importantly, the leader should create a **social environment** by organizing regular contact points during which members of the team can meet and get to know each other better. Human connections are necessary to improve trust and to help them work in a more relaxed atmosphere. Even in a virtual context, the leader can build personal connections with everyone and have an online environment which is not about work. Thus, the leader should give space for social communication (see iii. Communication) to maintain trust (Interviews, M. Lukac, J. El Azzouzi, K. Nabrdalik, Appendices 2, 4 and 6).

Secondly, the leader should also put an emphasis on a clear strategy of **personal development** for his members. Virtually it is difficult to track the personal development, however in AIESEC, team leaders organize every month a meeting with each member to evaluate their personal development. A clear strategy helps to keep trust in the team as people see that they are growing in their role and do not feel they are just being outsourced (Interview, K. Calin, Appendix 5).

Thirdly and lastly, by giving members more **responsibilities** in their work and even giving them some part of the leader's job, they will feel the leader trust them enough to bear higher responsibilities. In continuity with this, the manager should recognize and celebrate work and effort of his team members as this will improve trust (Interview, K. Nabrdalik, Appendix 6).

Trust is definitely a success factor for AIESEC's GVTs as the leader can engage more his team and can, by consequence, increase the team performance. Trust fosters teamwork and allows managers to give more autonomy to their members. Thanks to trust, the manager will be able to delegate his work to his members. If there is no trust, the leader will micromanage and think that doing everything alone is better instead of delegating his work and empowering the others to work independently (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3).

ii.   CULTURE

In AIESEC's global organization, culture plays a crucial role in the success of GVTs. In fact, AIESEC's members come from different countries, more than 120 countries, and have their own culture, their own history, their own education. According to Jaouad El Azzouzi, MCP of Belgium, *"culture is a set of behaviors that is being followed up upon by people that they have learned or adapted"* (Interview, J. El Azzouzi, Appendix 4). If the leader or a team member does not understand these behaviors, communication might be ineffective. Inside Europe, people have more or less a similar culture. But when compared with Africa and Asia, cultures are very different and some behaviors can lead to misunderstandings and ineffective communication.

In AIESEC, depending on the committee level, culture has a different impact. In a Local Committee, teams are mostly composed of people from the same country, thus, with the same culture which does not play an important role in the success of the team (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3). On the contrary, in Global and National Committees, people come mostly from different countries and have their own culture that influences how they behave.

The role of the manager is to use these cultural differences that shape the team as a strength and to foster cultural understandings through cultural trainings (Szewc, 2013). Indeed, on the AIESEC national and global level, VT leaders organize meetings at the beginning of the year during which they do **cultural trainings** and workshops. This allows team members to get to know each other and to present how they behave in an organization. It depends on their culture whether they prefer direct or indirect communication, they are lacking confidence, they are process-oriented, they are introverted or extraverted, they have high or low power distance, etc. Afterwards, the leader maps this out and detects the main challenges he could face. Furthermore, he also finds patterns between members because as unique as every culture is, most cultures have very similar understandings and similar concepts. The manager must find the common patterns that fit everyone and make them broad enough for all his team members. In other words, he will find common aspects of different cultures and use them as a strength by connecting people with common features and giving them space to work together (Interviews, K. Nabrdalik, M. Lukac, M. Vang, Appendices 6, 2 and 8). After 6 months, AIESEC's VT managers should proceed to a review of the cultural understandings and make adjustments if needed. Nonetheless, apart from these official trainings, the manager should promote quick

conversations about culture with each member to increase understandings between each other (Interview, K. Nabrdalik, Appendix 6).

In addition to cultural trainings, GVT managers should, upfront, set up clear strategies of **unnegotiable behaviors** that all members should adopt. The AIESEC organization has a clear vision, a clear set of values (see iv. Values) and clear goals that all members follow. The set of values creates the organization's culture and suggests the behaviors each member should adopt. Thus, in AIESEC's GVTs, people work in respect with the values of the organization because they do not make any distinction between people from different cultures as they are the same for everyone.

On the other hand, some aspects can be negotiable and the manager needs to adapt his leadership style based on everyone's culture. The way of working, the way of learning and evolving in the team has to be approached individually by the manager. For instance, in Asia, people need a more personal approach to work effectively while in Europe this need is less felt (Interviews, K. Calin, J. El Azzouzi, Appendices 5 and 4). As an example of open-mindedness, AIESEC's advertisements in Belgium directly target young people while in China, they target the parents who will then give their approbation to their child to participate in a student organization.

Finally, GVT managers should **adapt** their **communication to cultures**. In global virtual teams, communication channels and the way people communicate will differ from a culture to another. For example, Chinese people use "WeChat[5]" while Europeans rather use different communication tools such as WhatsApp[6]. The culture influences how people communicate, for instance, someone coming from a culture that has a very low power distance[7], such as the USA, will communicate differently with his leader from someone who comes from a high power distance culture, such as Mexico. Therefore, by understanding each other's culture, the virtual

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[5] WeChat is a free messaging and calling application. Retrieved from Wikipedia (n.d.), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WeChat

[6] WhatsApp is a free instant messaging service for smartphones created in 2009. Retrieved from Wikipedia (n.d.), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WhatsApp

[7] Power distance *"expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. In societies with low Power Distance, people strive to equalize the distribution of power and demand justification for inequalities of power."* (Hofstede, G. retrieved from https://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html)

team will have a better communication and a better way of working (Interview, K. Nabrdalik, Appendix 6).

iii.   COMMUNICATION

In AIESEC, communication is considered as the first and most essential factor that leads virtual teams towards success. In a virtual environment, where team members do not see each other every day, the performance of a virtual team relies heavily on effective communication, both written and oral (Interview, K. Nabrdalik, Appendix 6).

AIESEC's virtual team leaders put a strong emphasis on setting up clear common internal **communication rules**: which channels to use, which tools to use, what means urgent vs less urgent communication, how often to communicate. In a global context, the leader should understand his team's needs and align them with every team member to have the same communication procedures otherwise people can get lost and important information might not be transmitted. (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3).

In AIESEC, all **business-related and formal communications** take place on one single platform, Slack (see vii. Technology and Tools). The leader has the responsibility to develop and foster discipline for the use of Slack by the team members whenever they work on their projects. This is because Slack gives the possibility to the leader to track their work and to see the progress made on every project. Emails are also used for work-related topics but are less recommended. They are not used for interaction but usually for a one-side communication where people only confirm the reception. Virtual team leaders want to give their members space to communicate about their projects to bring new ideas. They also put emphasis on Skype talk or Google Hangouts (see vii. Technology and Tools) with the camera on so that the leader and his members have a visual contact and people create a personal attachment towards the team (Interview, M. Lukac, K. Calin, Appendices 2 and 5).

Regarding **social communication**, it plays also an important role in the team as it favors social connection between members and make them feel they are part of the team and not being only machines that work every day. In a virtual environment, it is much more difficult to have random conversations you would have if members would work together in the same office.

Indeed, in a face-to-face context, people have much more space to talk about random topics during lunch or at the coffee corner. To circumvent the lack of face-to-face relationships, AIESEC leaders use social networks accessible on smartphones such as Facebook[8] and WhatsApp as an informal means of communication. Each AIESEC virtual team leader has his own strategy of establishing social communication inside his team. Indeed, some favor morning questions such as "How are you doing? How was your week-end? It is important for the manager to know the state of mind of his team but also of each member who shares the same experience. Global manager of AIESEC, Karinna Calin, for her part, proceeds to "selfie" check-ins: each member sends a picture to say he/she is active. According to her "*small things like that* (Selfie check-ins) *are building our team culture*" (Interview, K. Calin, Appendix 5). As a consequence of a good social communication, people get more engaged with the team and they get to know each other better which improves their trust (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3).

iv.   SOCIAL SKILLS

According to AIESEC's GVT leaders, social skills are very important when it comes to virtual team management. Indeed, a leader needs to make sure that a social environment exists and lasts during the one-year term. Consequently, team members feel more engaged and it results in the success of his team to achieve the final objectives. Among his social skills, the leader must be able to establish relationships, cohesion and motivation.

1) Establishing relationships

Initially, AISESEC VT managers recommend starting every year, after the change of the annual leadership, with an introduction meeting regrouping the whole team. Indeed, during this first common meeting, new members present themselves and get to know each others' backgrounds, culture, ideas, hobbies, etc. This helps to establish a first contact and everybody gets comfortable with each other. Thanks to this ice-breaking meeting, members learn how they will be able to help each other and interact with everyone. The first meeting is also important for

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[8] Facebook is an American online social media and social networking service created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg. Retrieved from Wikipedia (n.d.), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook

the manager to ask each member their personal and professional objectives (Interviews, M. Vang, M. Lukac, Appendices 8 and 2).

In addition to that, Daniel Bauman and Mimi Vang, two global managers, strongly recommend creating a social group on both Whatsapp and Facebook. However, Daniel created his group before everyone knew each other while Mimi created it after their first meeting. This group allows members to interact, plan and share between each other. For instance, team members send their greetings from where they are or post a picture of an activity they were doing. This creates a dynamic and connects people even though they do not see each other physically (Interviews, D. Bauman, M. Vang, Appendices 7 and 8).

Moreover, to further establish relationships, team leaders favor frequent social communication. Their goal is to create a small community inside their team through some behaviors within the work environment. For instance, the selfie check-ins, the morning social questions and sending pictures, previously mentioned, are fun behaviors that lead people to interact and it soothes the atmosphere. Over time, members will automatically communicate more frequently which is a good basis for creating an environment to build an online community (Interview, J. El Azzouzi, Appendix 4).

2) Cohesion

At AIESEC, it is key to work interdependently to achieve common objectives. According to AIESEC's leaders, a good cohesion between team members results from a good establishment of relationships. The first meeting and frequent communication, business-related and social, are typically used to build cohesion inside the global virtual team (Interviews, D. Bauman, Appendix 7).

3) Motivation

In AIESEC, VT leaders want their members to be self-motivated, to be led by intrinsic motivation[9]. Every AIESEC's member starts as a volunteer and does not get paid for his work

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[9] Intrinsic motivation: *"Stimulation that drives an individual to adopt or change a behavior for his or her own internal satisfaction or fulfillmentent"* (Retrieved from http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/intrinsic-motivation.html).

until he reaches the International or Global Committee. Therefore, volunteers find their motivation in what AIESEC stands for and because they believe in the vision of the organization (Interview, M. Lukac, Appendix 2). The recruitment process of VT members includes a one on one meeting, where leaders proceed to a personal assessment to understand the intrinsic motivation of the candidate. During this meeting, they make sure the candidates are aware of what they are applying for, why they are here, what are their learning objectives, how their job can fulfill their personal and professional objectives, etc. Once the candidate is integrated in a team, managers keep their personal assessment in mind and set goals that are attainable and suited for each member. They also establish a step by step plan on how to achieve the annual objective. In turn, each member will then find his own way of working that motivates him (Interviews, M. Vang, J. El Azzouzi, M. Dias, Appendices 8, 4 and 3).

To further motivate their members, AIESEC's virtual team leaders also organize monthly one on one meetings with their members to assess their personal development. During this conversation, the manager uses half the time to talk about their goals and performance (see v. Mission and Goal Clarity) and the other half to talk about their personal development, how they feel, how their job helps them in fulfilling their personal objectives, etc. This helps them to understand what they get out of their AIESEC experience, which is motivating (Interview, D. Bauman, Appendix 7).

Finally, extrinsic motivation[10] is never materialized in AIESEC but only comes in the form of personal recognition and consistent feedbacks. Recognition is very important because it celebrates the success of someone's work. Some leaders do it in a funny way, for example, by posting a funny picture congratulating the member who performed well. Marco Dias explained that one of his VPs is a Pokemon[11] fan and is responsible for finding new partners in AIESEC. Marco gave him recognition by integrating the VP's picture with the video game picture and its slogan, "Gotta catch them all (Partners)". In fine, this created an incentive for the whole team to achieve results (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3).

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[10] Extrinsic motivation: *"Motivation that comes from external sources, such as monetary rewards and trophies"* (Retrieved from http://study.com/academy/lesson/extrinsic-motivation-in-psychology-definition-examples-types.html)
[11] Pokemon is a video game created in 1996 with the particular slogan "Gotta Catch Them All" (Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pok%C3%A9mon)

v.   MISSION AND GOAL CLARITY

The mission and goal clarity is very important in AIESEC as goals change and evolve every year to achieve the 5-year global goal. But this is even more important when it comes to virtual teams as the manager cannot do daily checks and see how projects evolve. In the end, each president will make the final goal very clear to reach success with his team (Interview, M. Vang, Appendix 8).

From the beginning, **during the recruitment** of new AIESEC member or during the recruitment of an activemember for a new position, the manager makes very clear what the job will look like and why he needs him in the team. He will give a very clear definition of the mission and vision of the whole team. It is essential for the GVT leader to align the annual objectives of his team with the mission and vision of AIESEC and to transmit it in each objective of his members. During the one on one recruitment meeting, the leader not only sets his expectations and the job description but also explains how the member will concretely contribute to the global goal. This makes the candidate feel part of AIESEC. In each team, whether local, national or global, the leader and his team base their actions on contributing to "peace and fulfillment of humankind's potential. For example, an AIESEC member sending an email to an external person will make sure to transmit the global mission through his email and hopes that his correspondent will, by consequence, make a positive impact in his home (Interviews, M. Lukac, K. Calin, M. Dias, Appendices 2, 5 and 3).

As we previously said, at the beginning of every new year, each president or team leader has annual objectives. They then ask their members to **break down the annual objectives** into six-months, three-months, one-month, one-week and one-day objectives. According to Daniel Bauman and Mimi Vang, the ideal strategy in AIESEC is to work by putting 3 priorities for the first six-months and then break down these priorities into 3 priorities for each term. By consequence, each member ends up with 3 priorities every week and every day that he has to fulfill to achieve his objectives. This helps managers to keep track of their members and to see the evolution in the projects of each member (Interview, D. Bauman, M. Vang, Appendices 7 and 8).

To monitor progress, AIESEC leader use **regular progress reviews**.

On a daily basis AIESEC's GVT leaders do not interact with their members to speak about business topics. Managers do not want to bother their colleagues the whole time. They understand their members need some time to move things forwards. Daily, managers rather speak about random topics and favor social communication even though they stay open for any formal question about their projects (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3).

Weekly, managers organize a virtual Monday-meeting with the whole team during which everyone presents his progress in projects and defines his objectives of the week.

Monthly, leaders proceed to a one on one meeting with each of their members. Half of the time is dedicated to a review of their goals, their performance and the manager takes time to give feedbacks, whether positive or negative. The leader clarifies their mission again and remembers his members why there are in the organization and sets the new objectives. The other half of the time is used to assess their personal development. The team leader wants to know how his members feel inside the team, how they think they contribute to the success, if they are motivated, how they develop themselves in their personal objectives. The long term objective of AIESEC is to engage and develop every young person in the world which starts with the people in AIESEC.

Then, after six months, every team leader proceeds to a "re-planning". This means that, after the planning made at the beginning of the year, the VT leader updates the goals of the team by increasing the targets or making them more realistic based on the results achieved so far. In addition to that, the leader also proceeds to a more in-depth review of each member regarding his professional and personal development in the team (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3).

Finally, at the end of the year, every team leader ends his term with an overall evaluation during which he gives his positive and negative feedbacks to his team, ask his members how they felt during their experience and transmit the projects to the next team leader who will start the next term (Interview, M. Lukac, Appendix 2).

vi. LEADERSHIP

In virtual teams, the best leadership style is hard to find and varies from team to team. In AIESEC, as the leadership changes every year, it is hard to establish one concrete and unique style of leading GVTs. Indeed, the dynamic of each team is very different from team to team and influences the way the manager will operate. Therefore, every VT leader has to establish good connections with his members and find the dynamic that suits the whole team (Interview, D. Bauman, Appendix 7).

Nevertheless, even though the leadership style depends on the team, AIESEC's VT leaders strongly recommend finding a good **mix between the management by objective and the self-management style**. This means, on the one hand, each team leader has to behave as the leader of the team by tracking, reviewing the performance of his members and give them regular feedbacks. He has to be able to analyze the results and report them to his superiors. On the other hand, he also needs *"to be the glue of the whole team"* (Interview, K. Calin, Appendix 5). He has to develop and bring to fore his social skills. He is responsible for managing conflicts, motivating, having empathy and creating a relaxed social environment. In other words, in AIESEC, VT leaders act as coaches both professionally by giving constant feedbacks and socially by being always available through social communication. They give sufficient autonomy to their members to work by themselves but organize, on a regular basis, individual or collective meetings during which projects and personal development are being reviewed.

In addition to that, the main objective of AIESEC is to **develop the leader of tomorrow** in each young person by offering them experience (Interview, D. Bauman, Appendix 7). AIESEC has set clear competences for their leaders (see Figure 15): being self aware, empowering the others, being a world citizen and being solution oriented.

Figure 15: *Qualities of Young AIESEC Leaders (Leadership Development Model)*

SELF AWARE	EMPOWERING OTHERS	WORLD CITIZEN	SOLUTION ORIENTED
UNDERSTANDS AND LIVES **PERSONAL VALUES**	**COMMUNIVATES EFFECTIVELY** IN DIVERSE ENVIRONMENTS	BELIEVES IN THEIR ABILITY **TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE** IN THE WORLD	ADAPTS AND SHOWS **RESILIENCE** IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES
FOCUSES ON STRENGTHS OVER WEAKNESSES	**DEVELOPS** & **EMPOWERS** OTHER PEOPLE	INTERESTED IN **WORLD ISSUES**	TRANSMITS **POSITIVITY** TO MOVE FORWARD **THROUGHOUT UNCERTAINTY**
EXPLORES ONE'S **PASSIONS**	ENGAGES WITH OTHERS TO **ACHIEVE A BGGER PURPOSE**	ENJOYS **TAKING RESPONSIBILITY** FOR IMPROVING THE WORLD	TAKES **RISKS** WHEN IT'S NEEDED

Source: AIESEC Global (2017) Retrieved from https://aiesec.org/about-us

Every team leader in AIESEC develops these four qualities during his experience and helps his members to achieve them (Interview, M. Lukac, Appendix 2).

vii. TECHNOLOGY AND TOOLS

AIESEC GVTs rely daily on ICTs to make sure teams are organized, things are getting done and deadlines are met. In a remote environment, the leader must make sure everyone in the team is in harmony by choosing the right communication tools. Therefore, AIESEC leaders pay great attention to using the right tool according to the topic or the person as this will positively influence the performance of the team.

As we previously mentioned, the main tool AIESEC leaders use is **Slack for business-related communication** (Interview, J. El Azzouzi, Appendix 4). It is a very user-friendly software available in a desktop version and an application for smartphone. The platform allows instant messaging. AIESEC virtual team leaders highly encourage their member to interact instantly on their projects. Furthermore, within Slack many different channels can be created, whether private or public, which allows AIESEC members to separate projects, teams, topics, etc. This helps them to be organized and keep a clear track on their projects. The platform is not only useful for instant messaging but also for file sharing (images, spreadsheets, PDFs documents) with the whole team[12].

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[12] https://slack.com/is

While on the global and national level, Slack is the main platform for business-related communication, at the local level, in Local and even the National Committees, GVT leaders use different tools depending on the people composing their team: spreadsheets, emails, dashboards, etc. It depends on some factors such as the Internet connection, the habits of some people, the culture of people, etc. (Interviews, J. El Azzouzi, D. Bauman, Appendices 4 and 7). Skype[13] and Google Hangouts[14], video chat communication platforms, are often used, during the weekly meetings for instance. AIESEC team leaders advocate for the use of the camera so that each member can see his or her interlocutor.

Conversely, **for social interactions**, leaders use instant messaging through social networks such as **Facebook and WhatsApp**. The key is to avoid using these media for business-related topics as the information could get lost.

viii.   SELECTION OF THE RIGHT PEOPLE

The selection of the right people is a factor that did not appear explicitly in our literature but, despite of that, it plays an important role in AIESEC GVTs performance. It covers the selection of both new and active members for a global virtual team. The reason AIESEC gives so much importance to the recruitment procedure is that GVT leaders want to ensure that their new team members will align with the vision of the organization and become an integral part of the community. Everywhere in the world, AIESEC wants its members to transmit its values and vision to other people.

The selection starts with 'promotional' materials, such as video, Facebook posts, newspaper advertising, to attract the right people for the available positions. These materials will all convey the AIESEC vision in an effort to recruit people who identify themselves with it.
Every position at AIESEC requires a strong knowledge of the organization and what it stands for. Therefore, AIESEC leaders create a job offer which includes a general description of the

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[13] Skype is a platform that allows users to have calls, video calls, video conferencing calls through the Internet. Retrieved from Wikipedia (n.d.), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skype
[14] Google Hangouts is an instant messaging and video conferencing platform developed by Google. Retrieved from Wikipedia (n.d.), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Hangouts

organization, its **vision and values**. It also contains the overall role with the specific job description, the specific working hours, the ways of communicating, the people responsible for the team, and so on. During the interview sessions, generally one or two, the team leader, regardless of the open position, has to make sure applicants understand the long-term direction of the organization and are able to translate AIESEC's vision in their plans. He also puts an emphasis on describing the job and assessing the corresponding **functional skills** as, in virtual teams, training and education is more difficult because of the time and location restrictions. In VTs, managers do not have a direct contact with their members and, thus cannot intervene frequently. Therefore, they need people with sufficient functional expertise to deliver their task on time. A new member integrating a VT will also be assessed through several tests such as case studies on different skills: strong communication, a good English level, the ability to work independently, the capacity to use the different tools used by AIESEC, etc. (Interviews, D. Bauman, J. El Azzouzi, Appendices 7 and 4).

On top of that, team leaders complete a **personality** test that will be updated every month during the personal development meeting. In AIESEC, the personal development of each member is crucial as they want their member to become the leaders of tomorrow. Leaders evaluate the four qualities AIESEC promotes and keep an eye on it during their term. Among the **four qualities**, self-awareness is a key skill that a person needs in AIESEC because, in virtual teams, interventions and feedbacks of the managers occur less frequently. Team members have to be able to evaluate their work and take decisions to achieve their objectives (Interview, K. Calin, Appendix 5). Social open-mindedness, social communication are other examples of social skills team leaders look for when recruiting a new member.

d) GVTs Performance Measurement of AIESEC

In AIESEC, the performance is evaluated both individually and collectively. First, the performance is measured individually every month, during the one on one meetings, because each member in the team has different tasks. The measurement of the individual performance varies from an objective to another. For instance, in AIESEC, some members are responsible for delivering 'products', that means engaging people in AIESEC's volunteering or internship

programs. This can be easily measured by plotting a growth or decay curve during the year. But some objectives are less tangible and require a longer term performance evaluation, such as the entities development, which is the long term development of national committees of AIESEC (Interviews, M. Lukac, M. Vang, D. Bauman, Appendices 2, 8 and 7).

Then, the collective evaluation, which is based on the individual evaluation of each member, happens every week during the Monday-meeting and during the one-month, three-months and six-months reviews. At the end of the year is the final evaluation. We observe two different approaches inside AIESEC. The international board, exclusively judges the performance of these teams based on the accomplishment of their objectives. They are not looking at how the team achieved them. The virtual team manager also gives the priority to the achievement of the team objectives. But, for his part, he considers the success factors as essential for the evaluation of the team's performance. In fact, according to Daniel Bauman, *"The team dynamic and how people are treating and supporting each other is a main factor for being performant. I believe that if that's does not work, it is very unlikely that the other part will work."* (Interview, D. Bauman, Appendix 7). The leader should promote both the productivity of the team and the environment of the team, which corresponds to high trust, good social and business-related communication, the consideration of a multicultural team, good social skills, adapted communication tools, adapted leadership style, a clear description of the mission and the right selection of new members (Interview, M. Dias, Appendix 3). According to AIESEC GVT managers, each of the eight factors plays a crucial role in reaching higher performances and helping to achieve the annual objectives.

To conclude, we can say that AIESEC GVT leaders are ambitious about the level of performance they want to reach. Jaouad El Azzouzi says that the highest performance a GVT wants to reach is *"when the only thing that will still affect the goals are external factors that the team cannot do directly anything about it and even then sometimes they still reach their objectives because the team is then in a stage where they can adapt very fast and quickly"* (Interview, J. El Azzouzi, Appendix 4).

GENERAL CONCLUSION

From the interviews, it clearly appears that AIESEC recognizes the 7 factors identified in the literature as key drivers of GVTs' success. They even identify an 8th factor which is the selection of the right people. While this conclusion validates the concepts described in the literature, we want to push the conclusion beyond the question "What are the key success factors that lead AIESEC global virtual teams to higher performance?". AIESEC is an organization with strong specificities. We want to analyze what focus AIESEC gives to each factor and how AIESEC implements them to take these specificities into account.

The two main AIESEC specificities are the yearly renewal of all teams and the very young age of the members. The energy and creativity of young people, combined with the "pressure" to accomplish in only 12 months bring a lot of dynamism to the organization. But the risks are evident in terms of level of experience and business continuity. To ensure that the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, AIESEC has developed different responses on the 8 factors.

Selection of the right people

Working with new GVT members every year requires that they be very quickly performant. It all starts with the selection of the right profile, the 8th factor, whether it is a new AIESEC member or an active member moving to a leading position. The selection process puts a lot of emphasis on the criteria that will make the candidate successful:

- for new members: his/her alignment with AISEC vison and values, the capacity to work independently, strong communication and social skills;
- for active members, the same criteria with also: previous experience and performance, demonstration of the 4 AIESEC qualities (self-awareness, empowering others, world citizen, solution oriented).

Trust and culture

Then it is about ensuring a quick integration in the new GVT. Each GVT leader establishes the foundation of good cooperation in terms of trust and culture. Very early he holds a first face-to-face team meeting during which he establishes relationships and team standards. He also holds a cultural training to identify the common patterns among the GVT members.

Mission & goal clarity

Given the GVT short life span (12 months), it is crucial to quickly have an alignment on the AIESEC vision, mission and goals across all organization levels. Every member must understand "how the small steps contribute to the big picture". While an overall alignment is already assessed during the selection process, the GVT leader also clarifies from the start the specific GVT goals and how they fit in the overall vision and mission. To make them even more tangible, goals are then set for 6 months, 3 months and 1 month.

Leadership

The leadership style applied in AIESEC GVTs is a mix of management by objectives and self-management. While the literature evidenced these styles as dominant for GVT success, AIESEC is bringing an important response to the fact that goals must be achieved in only 12 months and by young people. They use a very close follow-up:

- weekly: team reviews focused on the progress made on the projects
- monthly: one on one reviews to assess individual performance and training needs
- 6-months: review for the "re-planning" of priorities and goals.

This process not only ensures a good tacking of progress but also favors talent development.

Social skills, communication and technology

Working with young people requires an adaptation to their lifestyle and aspirations. At AIESEC, this is well integrated. GVT leaders pay specific attention to the balance between business-related and social communication. They understand very well the key drivers of a team performance made of young people: establishing informal relationships, building cohesion, and identifying intrinsic motivation. The GVT leader must be "the glue of the team". Facebook and WhatsApp are the channels dedicated to social communication while Slack and e-mails are used for business purposes. Interestingly, when it comes to recognition of business achievements, social media are used with some humor. This perfectly fits the young age of

AIESEC members and the not-for-profit dimension of the organization where recognition is not made of any material reward.

Clearly, AIESEC leaders have adapted the way they run GVTs to the characteristics of the organization. They use the 8 factors with a lot of coherence as these are extremely interdependent. This is a strong sign of maturity and professionalism for "a Youth Movement Envisioning Peace and Fulfilment of Humankind's Potential".

Finally, we propose to future AIESEC GVT leaders a summary of the good practices that will help them to reach higher performance.

Figure 16: *Summary of AIESEC best practices for GVT performance*

Key Success Factor for GVT performance	Summary of AIESEC practices
Trust	Build trust - Develop an effective accountability/tracking system - Promote integrity, commitment, transparency and competences Maintain trust - Create a social environment - Pay attention to personal development - Give more responsibilities
Culture	- Organize upfront face-to-face meeting and cultural training - Map out the common cultural patterns - Set up negotiable and unnegotiable behaviors
Communication	- Set up clear common communication procedures - Make clear distinction between tools for business- and non business-related topics - Promote social communication through social tools
Social Skills	- Establish relationships with an early introduction meeting - Build cohesion with frequent communication - Encourage usage of social Apps for social communication - Motivate team members by understanding their intrinsic motivation and celebrating their success
Mission and goal clarity	- Bring clarity at all stages: in job offer, in interview, in annual team goals, in reviews - Ask members to break down annual objective in 6-, 3-, 1-month, 1-week objectives. - Organize regular reviews: weekly, monthly, 3-months, 6-months reviews (deeper reviews the longer the deadline)

Leadership	- Balance the 'management by objective' style with the 'self-management' style - Act both as team leader by tracking and as a social coach by developing your social skills: *"Be the glue of the team"* - Develop the leader of tomorrow on AIESEC 4 qualities: self-aware, empowering others, world citizen, solution oriented
Technology and tools	- Business topics: promote exclusive usage of Slack (you can also use emails, Google Hangouts, Skype) - Non business topics: use WhatsApp and Facebook but limit to social communication (business info could get lost)
Selection of the right people	- Give importance to recruitment - Ensure candidate's alignment with AIESEC long term vision and values - Review functional skills and experience - Evaluate on AIESEC 4 qualities - Assess skills to work in a GVT: strong communication and social skills, English level, autonomy, tools knowledge

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Our research focuses on the AIESEC case study. The conclusions cannot be translated to any other type of organization. While we have seen that the 7 factors identified in the literature were all validated as important at AIESEC, we have also highlighted that the way AIESEC implements them is very specific and reflects the characteristics of its organization. As future research, we could suggest analyzing GVT key success factors in other contexts e.g. other not-for-profit organizations, multinational companies, public organizations, sport associations, the army, etc.

In this research, we have used a qualitative method: semi-structured interviews of a limited number of GVT leaders and members. This allows us to identify the possible ways the factors influence the team performance. A quantitative research would allow to give a broader perception across the entire organization, to identify strengths and weaknesses, to quantify the perceived impact of each factor on the GVT performance and to recommend improvements.

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