

IJPSC

International Journal of Psychology and Strategic Communication

ISSN: 2941-5691 (Online) 2941-5705 (Print) [23]

DOI: 10.61030/UUMA1480



STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING REMOTE TEAMS IN INTERNATIONAL ENTERPRISES

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Abstract

This article examines the strategies, tools, and influencing factors in managing remote teams within international companies in a changing external environment. The goal is to explore the unique aspects of managing remote teams in the context of cross-geographical interactions within modern organizations.

Key challenges affecting multinational collaboration are discussed, such as communication difficulties, coordination, and cultural differences. The article highlights the importance of effective leadership, adaptive organizational culture, and the use of innovative digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, to enhance remote team productivity. It analyzes current approaches to managing remote teams, including shared leadership concept, flexible hiring practices, and optimizing work processes across different time zones and cultural contexts.

The research emphasizes the critical impact of external factors on the growth of remote team practices. Recommendations are provided for improving management practices to ensure the effectiveness of remote teams in international business.

Keywords

remote work, leadership, international management, organisational culture, team communication, adaptability, human resource management.

Problem statement

Managing remote teams in international companies presents unique challenges related to communication, coordination, and maintaining high levels of productivity. The lack of physical presence, cultural differences, and time zone disparities can complicate task execution and decision-making processes. There is a need to develop and implement effective management strategies that enable companies to ensure productive collaboration in a remote work environment.

Relevance of the chosen topic

Modern international companies are increasingly adopting full or partial remote work models, presenting new management challenges. To stay competitive and efficient in today's globalized environment, innovative strategies for managing remote teams are vital. These approaches unlock the potential of geographically dispersed teams, enhancing collaboration across diverse cultures and time zones. Understanding these strategies is key to developing effective work models that align with the current needs and trends of global business.

Analysis of recent research and publications

Many domestic and international researchers have focused on this topic. Authors such as Goreiko, D., and Ilchuk, P. (2024) highlight the theoretical foundations of remote teams and methods for managing them, describing communication models and the use of digital tools to enhance remote work efficiency. Grinchak, N., and Motuzka, O. (2020) mainly focus on the communication aspects of virtual teams, emphasizing the importance of establishing transparent and effective interaction between team members in a remote environment.

The works of researchers like Gasaab, O. V. (2023) and Valenduc, M. (2023) analyze the specifics of managing multinational and cross-geographical teams, particularly the challenges related to cultural differences and organizational culture within these teams.

Issues of effective management and leadership models are explored in the study of Batırlık, Gencer, & Akkucuk (2022). Additionally, Pearce & Conger (2003) provide a detailed analysis of the impact of shared leadership and different types of teams.

The influence of innovative approaches and technologies, including artificial intelligence, is considered in the works of Budhwar et al. (2024) and Treacy, S. (2022).

Purpose of the article

The aim of the article is to study the features of managing remote teams in international companies in the context of a changing external environment. To achieve this goal, the following tasks were identified:

- Investigating how the external environment influences the need for creating remote teams in international companies;
- Examining the key characteristics of remote teams working in multicultural settings;
- Evaluating the role of innovative digital technologies in organizing work;
- Analyzing different forms of leadership in new market conditions.

Presentation of the main research material and results obtained

In today's globalised world, remote work is becoming an integral part of international companies' operations. Such circumstances require new approaches to team management to ensure effective communication and productivity. The study of remote team management strategies is becoming more relevant, as it allows to develop and make decisions that contribute to the successful functioning of organisations in a global environment.

The subject of the study is remote teams, the concept of which in the context of remote work is expanded to include technological aspects of interaction between its members. In general, a remote team can be described as a set of individuals collaborating at a distance, with clearly defined roles and interactions, united by common goals and supported by digital technologies that ensure the continuous exchange of information, ideas and resources (Horeiko & Ilchuk, 2024, p. 10).

The reason for the accelerated development and proliferation of remote teams was the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced international companies to choose new approaches to organising the work process. This forced transition has acted as a catalyst for the rapid introduction and adaptation of technologies that enable remote collaboration, and has also led to a transformation in approaches to labour organisation and team management. Accordingly, these transformations have caused a sharp increase in the number of vacancies with a fully remote work schedule, which amounted to 200% between February and April 2020. Also, the share of remote work adverts was positively correlated with the level of information technology use and technical education among workers (Hansen et al., 2023, pp. 16-19). Global market trends have finally confirmed the importance and necessity of developing new HR strategies for remote work. With the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, despite the measures taken to support businesses, economic stability and employment rates have worsened. Across Europe, the employment rate decreased by 10% on average. The largest proportions of such changes were observed in Greece and Spain (18%), as well as in Hungary and Romania (14%) (Ahrendt, D. et al., 2020, p. 9). These data show the significant impact that the pandemic has had on employment and labour market structure in

Europe. The changes caused by the pandemic required companies to develop new approaches to maintaining productivity and employee engagement. Remote work has become not only a necessary measure, but also an important part of many organisations' strategy to remain competitive in the long term.

As a result, the pandemic has not only accelerated the adaptation to remote work, but also highlighted the need of technological proficiency, the ability to hire staff efficiently and quickly, and to change requirements in an unstable labour market. In the face of these changes, digitalisation has become a key factor that has affected all aspects of business processes. Today, it is becoming not only an important aspect of internal business organisation, but also a strategic tool for successful global development, which allows companies to remain competitive in a rapidly changing global environment.

Current management strategies and their development in the context of remote work are based on the need to use new technologies, adaptability and readiness for change. As noted before, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused an accelerated change in approaches to the organisation of work processes. In line with this, traditional approaches and practices of teamwork have also been transformed. Table 1 compares the main transformations that have taken place with the classic management components in the context of remote work.

Table 1: Comparison of components of traditional and remote management practices

Component	Traditional Practices	Remote Management Practices
Communication	In-person contact and communication during offline meetings. Informal face-to-face interactions in the office.	Communication via mobile platforms, video conferences, and email.
Data Analytics and Reporting	Regular meetings to discuss data, physical monitoring, and reporting.	Using digital tools for data collection and activity analysis. Automatic reporting via software.
Planning and Task Monitoring	Long-term activity planning, physical meetings for progress monitoring, daily reports, attendance sheets.	Adaptive planning through online tools, real-time progress tracking via project management software (Trello, Asana, Jira, etc.).
Organizational Culture	Building corporate culture through shared events, employee presence in the social space.	Virtual events to engage the team, maintaining social media presence to support and showcase company culture and values.
Leadership and Motivation	Personal communication, direct mentorship, performance evaluation based on personal observations and attitudes.	Virtual mentorship, motivation through regular online meetings with a mentor, using adaptive technologies for skill development.
Professional Training and Development	On-the-job training, in-office workshops, lectures, and seminars.	Remote learning, online courses, webinars, and virtual training sessions.

**Source: compiled by the authors using data from (Hrynychak & Motuzka, 2020, p. 167; Perevozova, I.V. et al., 2023, p. 421)*

According to Table 1, the main conclusions about the nature of differences between traditional and remote HR management practices can be drawn:

1. Managing remote teams requires the use of additional software and mobile platforms that can expand the company's strategy.
2. Remote management complicates the development of an organisational culture and effective employee engagement due to the limited or no face-to-face interaction.
3. New management practices require flexibility and adaptability in decision-making, which creates new requirements for managers and team leaders.
4. Remote interaction of teams can complicate the process of conflict resolution, as the lack of personal contact and direct communication can prevent quick and effective conflict resolution.
5. The introduction of new tools and practices of remote interaction requires an understanding of cultural characteristics, national traditions and geographical factors that may affect the effectiveness of communication and cooperation.

Therefore, the main problems and challenges that arise in managing remote teams have a significant impact on the efficiency and organisation of work in the company, as well as on the formation of its corporate culture. Developing an organisational culture in companies with remote teams requires taking into account the set of factors shown in Fig. 1.

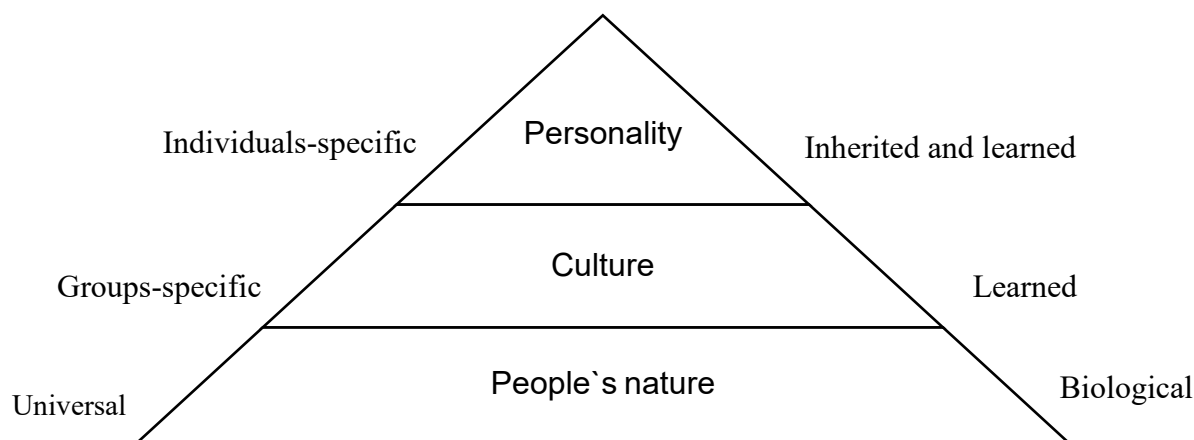


Fig 1. Factors influencing organisational culture

Source: (materials of presentations 'International Management' at the Mittweida University of Applied Sciences, 2024)

The organisational structure should be developed and maintained on the basis of a set of factors that include both primary needs based on universal human characteristics and behavioural patterns, and individual characteristics such as personal values, psychological traits, and the behavioural style of each employee. In international enterprises, national peculiarities and traditions of certain work groups also play a significant role, making the culture aspect even more complex and multilayered. Culture in international companies must take into account the diversity that arises from the interaction between representatives of different geographical environments.

Studies (Raghuram, 2021, p. 151-153) (Treacy, 2022, p. 552-553) show that one of the most pressing challenges today is to increase the level of effective communication in remote teams. In order to reduce the possibility of isolation and disconnection of employees from the team, the task of enterprises is to build open systems for interaction not only between employees of the same level, but also with senior line managers.

The problem of socialisation, knowledge sharing, communication and psychological stability of employees also requires the introduction of innovative interaction tools that can provide regular contacts, mentoring programmes and help in adapting to new working conditions. In addition to the common remote work applications (Zoom, Gmail, Google Meet and Google Docs), international organisations may expand their existing set of tools to increase the functionality of interaction. The latest applications such as CultureMonkey (CultureMonkey | Employee Engagement Platform) and Qualtrics (Qualtrics XM - Experience Management Software) allow to maintain communication with employees at all stages of their career path. They also allow collecting feedback through various channels, including surveys and chats. These tools also include sentiment analysis, which allows companies to understand the emotional state of remote teams and respond quickly to changes if necessary. CultureMonkey's HR tool also integrates with various business platforms, such as Zoho People and Workday, to help companies better adapt their culture to remote work.

In addition to implementing various tools to enhance socialization and communication in remote teams, effective leadership remains a key aspect. It should foster openness and adaptability in the team's work, creating space for innovative solutions even in remote work conditions. Two main behavioral models of a modern leader in multicultural remote teams can be distinguished. The first model is task-oriented, focusing on clearly defining roles and responsibilities for both the leader and other team members. In this model, the leader provides detailed instructions to ensure precise task execution and monitors business processes. Such behavior mostly has a positive impact on the quality of results in remote teams. The second style is relationship-oriented, focusing on communication efficiency and the mental well-being of team members. A leader of this type promotes positive communication interaction between colleagues, meeting their social needs and establishing sincere relationships based on mutual respect. A relationship-oriented leader primarily focuses on employees' emotional state, which helps strengthen their sense of value and trust within the team (Batırlık, Gencer, & Akkucuk, 2022, p. 3). Thus,

organizations now need to maintain a balance, monitoring the influence of each leader to support optimal work results. Since remote teams often face trends of isolation and detachment from the team, a two-stage system of formal leadership is proposed when forming new working groups and teams. At the formation and training stage, the leader should focus on building communication efficiency and creating balanced teams depending on employees' personal data, cultural background, and other factors. After completing this stage, a strategy oriented toward maximizing the effectiveness of task execution can be followed. In this way, maintaining flexibility in remote team management, the two-stage formal leadership system allows for combining initial team-building investment with a focus on achieving results in future work, ensuring the effective operation of remote teams.

However, considering the complexity of team management in a virtual environment, the possibility of shared leadership within the team can also be explored (Batırlık, Gencer, & Akkucuk, 2022, p. 4). The concept of shared leadership is viewed as a set of processes where leadership functions are distributed among team members rather than concentrated in one person. In this model, the focus shifts to joint decision-making, shared responsibility, and more active interaction within the team. Shared leadership is more flexible and adaptive compared to traditional leadership models (Pearce & Conger, 2003, p. 22).

Thus, effective leadership remains one of the key elements for the successful functioning of remote teams, especially in multicultural organizations. A balanced approach, which includes task orientation, communication, or shared decision-making, enables high performance while maintaining a positive psychological climate within the team. Leadership must be based on considering cultural differences and the work styles of the team.

In the context of global interaction, the international aspect becomes even more important. Cross-cultural teams may face numerous challenges, such as physical distance, different time zones, and differences in cultural environments. These factors are illustrated in Fig. 2.

Cross-cultural remote teams face numerous challenges, including:

1. Geographical distance, which, as previously mentioned, complicates coordination and creates a risk of social isolation and psychological detachment of certain employees.
2. Time differences, caused by working across various time zones, which can hinder the synchronization of work schedules within the team.
3. Diverse leadership styles characteristic of different cultures and nations, which may lead to misunderstandings and conflicts within the team as members have different expectations regarding the leader's role.
4. Cultural differences also play a key role in remote team collaboration, requiring the development of intercultural competence to better understand and respect all values and lifestyles.
5. Moreover, team members from different countries may have different perceptions of organizational culture and its role within the company, potentially causing difficulties in organizing the collaboration process.
6. Finally, language barriers, which may involve entirely different languages or various dialects, can create obstacles to mutual understanding and information exchange.

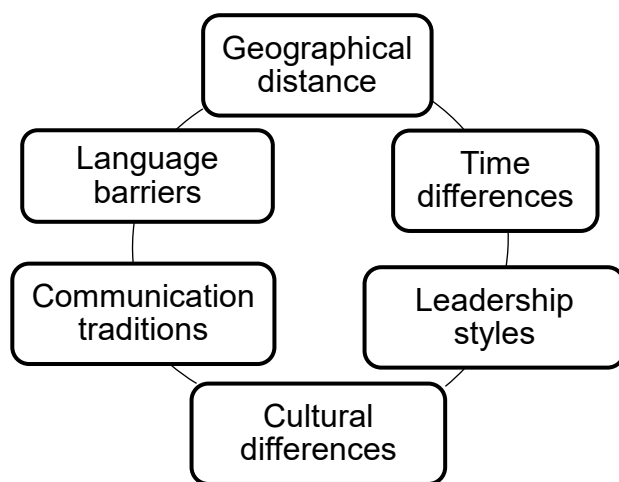


Fig. 2. Challenges in Cross-Cultural Teams
 Source: compiled by the authors

The presence of people from different cultural backgrounds in a group or team is called cultural

dispersion. It can negatively impact team productivity, especially when team members have different communication styles or conflict resolution strategies (Valenduc, 2023, p. 10). However, aside from the challenges in functioning, cultural differences can contribute to various positive aspects in the work of international teams. When communication is well-established, multinationality can become a source of innovative solutions and a creative, fresh approach to problem-solving. By synthesizing cross-geographical experiences, methods, and perspectives, unique and inherently innovative ideas can emerge, providing a competitive advantage in the global market. Additionally, cross-geographical teams with representatives from different cultures can offer a deeper understanding of potential foreign markets. These teams can provide valuable context and information about local market characteristics, cultural nuances, and consumer preferences. This can significantly enhance a company's competitiveness at a global level, allowing it to adapt more effectively to the dynamic and changing market conditions (Hasaaeb, 2023, p. 217).

To fully leverage the potential of cultural dispersion in remote cross-geographical teams, the following approaches can be used:

1. Global cultural exchange system. For example, the fully remote work organization of GitLab focuses on the continuous development and improvement of the remote environment (tools, meeting approach, collaboration, communication, overall compensation). The organization also organizes informal activities, such as sharing photos with descriptions of the workday and location tagged "#office-today." Such initiatives help teams get to know the cultural characteristics of each member through casual communication (GitLab, 2024).
2. Flexible hiring strategy. To recruit employees in new foreign markets, companies can use a combined HR policy. For deeper market adaptation and to foster creativity in decision-making within such teams, a fully geocentric HR management policy can be adopted. However, in this case, efforts should focus on strengthening coordination among team members. A polycentric HR policy may also be applied, but when forming new teams, preference should be given to employees who are more adaptable to changes and new working conditions (Mittweida University of Applied Sciences, 2024).
3. Forming a Shared Team Identity. Creating shared values, organizing virtual meetings, cross-cultural training to improve mutual understanding, and regular team-building activities will foster transparent communication and enhance the efficiency of multinational teams.

Thus, in managing and coordinating cross-cultural aspects of work in international remote teams, companies need to expand the classic set of management tools with innovative solutions. These could include feedback collection tools, augmented or virtual reality, comprehensive CRM systems for personnel management, or tools powered by artificial intelligence (AI). AI is gaining popularity as it can facilitate the management of remote teams, including international ones. AI can support decision-making based on analyzing large volumes of data, improving accuracy in HR processes such as performance evaluation, initial candidate screening, or career development planning. Additionally, AI systems can help overcome language barriers and cultural communication nuances through the use of automated translation technologies. However, the use of AI requires compliance with data protection laws. These tools must be designed to ensure the confidentiality of information (Budhwar et al., 2024). Therefore, the measured use of AI can not only optimize HR processes but also increase the engagement and satisfaction of employees in remote international teams. This can also improve the quality of communication and positively impact the effectiveness of collaboration in remote teams.

It can be noted that the rapid development of technologies and approaches to personnel management significantly changes the conditions of the labor market. As previously mentioned, the Covid-19 pandemic led to substantial transformations in traditional hiring and human resource management approaches. Increasingly, employees are preferring hybrid or fully remote work formats. The statistics on preferred work modes as of 2024 are shown in Fig. 3.

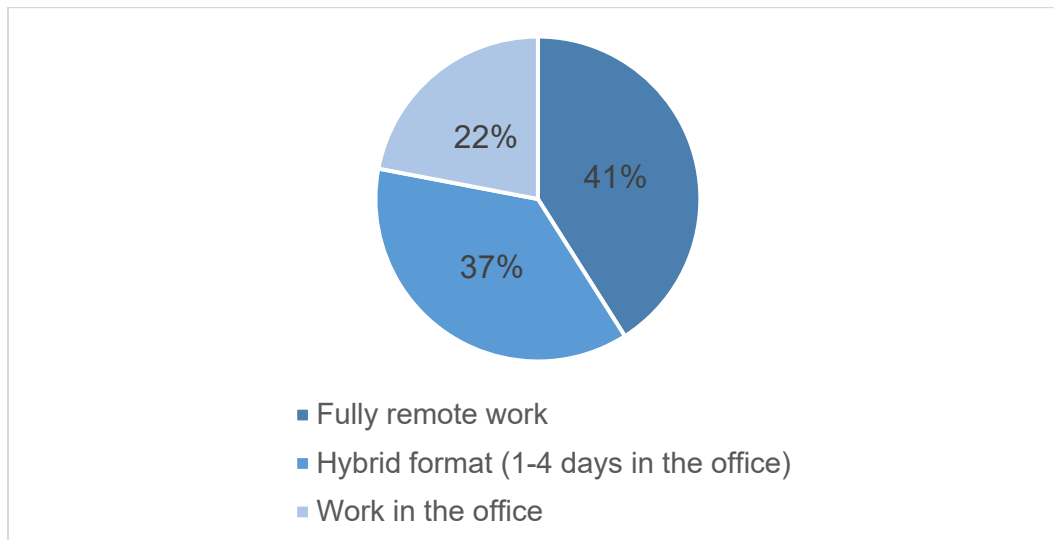


Fig. 3. Most Popular Work Models in 2024

Source: (Zoom, 2024)

Thus, the trends toward remote work remain strong. Therefore, it is essential to continue revising management strategies to effectively control and maintain employee productivity in remote conditions. However, not all industries can support a fully remote work format. Currently, the industry with the largest share of predominantly remote workers is the information technology sector, with 67% of employees working remotely (Statista, 2024). Other sectors, such as financial services, marketing, or project management, also show high rates of transitioning to hybrid or remote formats, though the share of such workers is significantly lower (Forbes, 2024). This indicates that adaptation to remote work varies depending on the specifics of the industry, and companies need to consider these factors when developing management strategies.

Conclusions

Managing remote teams in international companies is a complex task that requires the integration of various approaches to ensure efficiency and productivity. The remote work format, which became widely adopted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, continues to reshape the labor market, particularly in industries where digital technologies play a key role. The transformation of management processes has led to the need for companies to consider multinational characteristics, effective leadership, and actively use innovative tools such as artificial intelligence and CRM systems to implement successful strategies for managing such teams in an international context.

Given the numerous challenges of working with remote teams in international companies, special attention should be paid to global cultural exchange, building a shared team identity, and implementing clear and transparent communication processes. The use of artificial intelligence can improve data management, enhance productivity, and streamline communication, but it is important to comply with data protection regulations. Flexibility and adaptability in the hiring process are also essential for creating effective teams.

Therefore, it is recommended that international companies continually review and adapt their management strategies to remain competitive in the face of the growing demand for remote work formats.

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