

Chapter 11

Can We Count on You at a Distance?

The Impact of Culture on Formation of Swift Trust Within Global Virtual Teams

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The reality for a multinational corporation (MNCs) in the global era can be exemplified as follows: a company located in Asia assembling an ad hoc team comprised of a Taiwanese marketing manager, German engineers, and American financial consultants to collaborate on a project within a short period of time, i.e., 6–8 weeks. Although the team's expertise is outsourced from all parts of the globe, such temporary projects need to adhere to a stringent deadline. Thus, members need to complete their tasks quickly, efficiently, and effectively. To accomplish this, the formation of trust needs to take place in a more expeditious manner than in the usual teamwork arrangement (Dennis, Robert, Curtis, Kowalczyk, & Hasty, 2012; Greenberg, Greenberg, & Antonucci, 2007; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2002; Pinjani & Palvia, 2013; Robert, Dennis, & Hung, 2009). Challenges may arise during this process, because in most cases global virtual teams (GVTs) are comprised of people who have no historical background of working together and at best a limited understanding of how the other GVT members have performed in the past (Mohd Yusof & Zakaria, 2012). In short, GVTs face difficulty in developing swift trust due to several key characteristics: having members with diverse cultural backgrounds, working with strangers, adhering to short deadlines, and straddling different time zones.

A major reason that managing GVTs is incredibly challenging is that trusting behaviors are rooted in one's cultural values (Fukuyama, 1995). Members who come from different cultural backgrounds may fail to develop a trusting relationship

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quickly enough, within the time allotted to complete their project. For some cultures, it takes longer to develop a bond between members, yet such bonds are highly valuable and a prerequisite for working with others; conversely, in other cultures people tend to focus on the task to be completed and do not put a priority on relationship building when working with others (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998).

In their exploration of the issue of developing and maintaining trust in GVTs, Jarvenpaa, Knoll, and Leidner (1998) found that members experience "swift trust" in this new working structure. According to Meyerson, Weick, and Kramer (1996), swift trust contradicts the traditional definition that hinges on building interpersonal relationships. Instead, swift trust deemphasizes the interpersonal dimension and is based on broad categories of social structures and actions. The main drawback of swift trust is that it is fragile and ephemeral in nature. It is also more challenging to develop and maintain given the diverse cultural backgrounds present in GVTs. Several literature reviews in the area of cross-cultural management and intercultural communication have clearly established that one of the factors that hinder team performance is an inability to trust within and among members from divergent cultural backgrounds (Fukuyama, 1996; Gudykunst & Kim, 2002; Kim, Rark, & Suzuki, 1990; Ting-Toomey, 1999).

In years past, team members typically had the luxury of extended time together in which to develop a trusting relationship, learn about each other's behaviors, and build historical shared work experiences. Now, as organizations have begun to introduce the new work structure of GVTs, such long time spans are much less practical and less common. More and more often, team members are asked to cooperate on projects without a personal knowledge of their teammates. All they know is that the project must be completed within the time frame agreed upon (often fairly short) and that those with whom they are collaborating may be thousands of miles away.

Swift trust is defined as a high level of trust developed in the initial stages of working together over a short period of time (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). Meyerson et al. (1996) identify swift trust as a key competency for temporary teams (such as GVTs) which are formed around a common task with a limited life span, and which consist of people with diverse set of skills who (most importantly) have little prospect of working together again in the future. Robert et al. (2009) argue that trust can be built under temporary teamwork conditions, even when team members do not have any history of working together. Organizations need to realize that without a trusting relationship, team members in a distributed work environment will be unable to contribute and perform at their best within a short period of time; this is especially critical for complex and rapid-turnaround projects. Swift trust between members will enable them to collaborate effectively and efficiently and thereby achieve the desired goals of the team and, by extension, of the organization. As DeSanctis and Poole (1997) argued, team members with heterogeneous backgrounds will normally take more time to establish trust than those with homogenous backgrounds.

Depending on members' cultural backgrounds and communicative preferences, not all will be willing or even able to trust strangers in a relatively quick manner. To make such a structure work, organizations need to ensure that their employees are equipped with the cultural competencies necessary to effectively build swift

trust. Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003) clearly define cultural competencies as the knowledge and skills one acquire and possess that enables one to interact effectively with people of different nationality and/or cultural, ethnicity, and religious backgrounds.

Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to explore the overarching research question, "How do cultural values facilitate or hinder the formation of swift trust within global virtual teams?" Our primary argument is that team members encounter challenges in developing swift trust due to diverse cultural backgrounds. We use a cross-cultural theoretical lens to understand the impact of culture on swift trust formation. We propose that it is more challenging for members of a high context culture that value relationship building and the pursuit of collectivistic goals to develop swift trust. However, cultural theory suggests that trust formation is facilitated for such team members if the other team members belong to their in-group (e.g., colleagues, close friends, spouses) with whom they have established a relationship, rather than being total strangers. On the opposite end of the spectrum, team members from low context cultures that ascribe to individualism are more willing to develop swift trust if the goal is instrumental and focused on the task at hand (task orientation). We conclude the paper by offering some implications and guidelines for MNCs that want to utilize GVTs.

Conceptual Framework and Definitions

Figure 11.1, the conceptual framework of our study, illustrates the connection between three key concepts: GVTs, swift trust, and in-group vs. out-group. This framework grounds our exploration of GVTs from two perspectives: the challenges

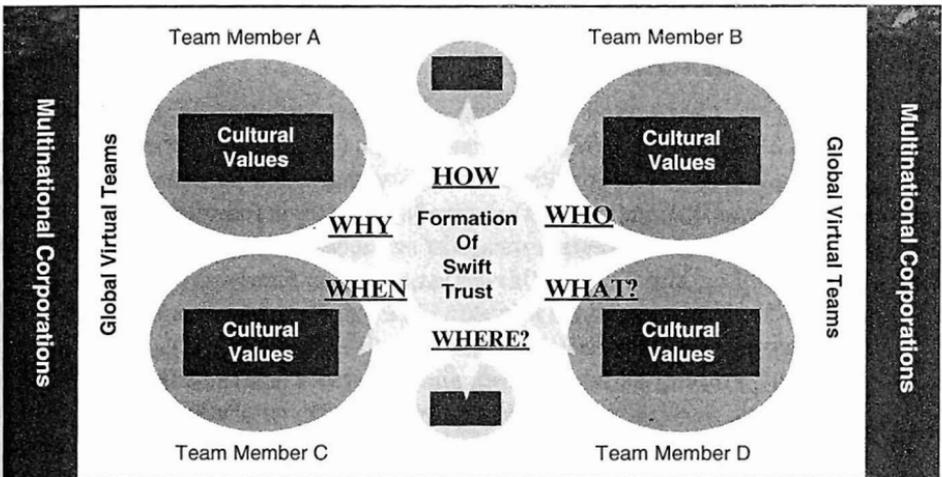


Fig. 11.1 Conceptual framework to understand the relationship between global virtual teams, cultural values, and swift trust

of developing swift trust and the synergistic conditions that facilitate the formation of swift trust. GVTs by their global nature are comprised of heterogeneous members with diverse cultural values. Such differences are strongly manifested in the practices, norms, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors which consequently shape the way team members work. Members of GVTs need to develop swift trust because a condition of trust facilitates their work, enabling them to meet stringent deadlines with efficiency and effectiveness. However, the formation of swift trust is impacted by one's cultural values, meaning that team members view trust building in different manners. The challenge arises because team members may hold different cultural values, and different cultural values prescribe different trusting behavior and different conditions for determining members' trustworthiness—either it complements others' trust behaviors, or it contradicts them and therefore creates conflict in trusting those who are strangers.

In this study, we use the concept of in-group vs. out-group to illustrate the nature of the relationships among team members and consequently how trust responses are affected based on team members' cultural values. For example, if members regard each other as being "in-group" it means that they have an established rapport since they have already formed strong bonds with each other. On the other hand, if members regard each other as "out-group" it means they are strangers or have established only an "arm's length" relationship, thus they are less acquainted or bonded with each other. These two aspects are crucial from a cultural standpoint. We present several questions in this chapter—for what purposes swift trust is required, with whom it needs to be built, under what circumstances it is needed, and the manner it is built—all of which need to be answered by conducting empirical studies. In short, the key questions *What, When, Why, Who, and How* determine which culturally rooted behaviors are relevant in swift trust formation. The following subsection briefly defines each of the key concepts shown in Fig. 11.1.

What Is a Global Virtual Team?

According to Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, and Gilson (2008), one of the key characteristics of team is that "...work teams have some level of interdependence and operate in an organizational context that influences their functioning" (p. 411). In addition, teams are an important means of enhancing an organization's creative and problem-solving capabilities (Jarvenpaa, Ives, & Pearlson, 1996; Zachary, 1998). In this chapter, we focus on a specific form of teams known as global virtual teams which have three salient characteristics: (1) culturally diverse, (2) geographically dispersed, and (3) rely on electronic communication (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). In their later work, Jarvenpaa and Leidner define a subtype of team, the ad hoc or temporary team, as one in which team members do not have a historical background and may not ever work together as a group in the future (Lipnack & Stamps, 1997). In a similar vein, Mohd Yusof and Zakaria (2012) and Maznevski and Chudoba (2000) define GVTs as groups that (1) are identified by their organization(s) and

members as a team; (2) are responsible for making and/or implementing decisions important to the organization's global strategy; (3) use technology-supported communication substantially more than face-to-face communication; and (4) work and live in different countries. Computer-mediated communication technology provides opportunities for people to collaborate without constraints of time and space.

What Is Swift Trust?

Swift trust is fundamentally reliant on the level or stage of team formation. Often, the challenge of forming swift trust arises for ad hoc or temporary teams that must collaborate on important and complex tasks (Meyerson et al., 1996) because it takes a relatively short time to work on finite tasks compared to a permanent team with an ongoing mission. In such cases, trust cannot be developed at a normal pace since the length of time the team is in existence is usually relatively short, whereas permanent teams may have a prolonged time frame to work on tasks and routines together. According to Adler (2007), swift trust normally arises at a team's inception stage. In this case, regardless of whether a team is temporary, long term, or permanent, swift trust can be challenging to develop at the early stage of team formation due to the common pitfalls of team dynamics. However, studies suggest that swift trust enables members to create conditions conducive to working together at a distance on a project that needs to be completed in a rather short time (Greenberg et al., 2007), regardless of whether the team is temporary (ad hoc) or permanent. Swift trust poses challenges because the initial stage of getting to know each other needs to be expedited in order to get the task done in a compressed time frame.

What Is In-Group vs. Out-Group?

The concept of in-group vs. out-group can be contextualized with respect to the cultural values of individualism vs. collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). For people from collectivistic cultures, the in-group includes family and friends and perhaps long-term work colleagues; people with whom one has worked before and developed a trusting relationship over time. The out-group consists of strangers and casual acquaintances, people with whom one has no history of working or with whom one has not formed strong bonds that lead to a trusting relationship. Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988) assert that the relationship between in-group members is normally stable and consistent over time. People from individualistic cultures, on the other hand, did not distinguish between in-group and out-group members. Findings from Gomez, Kirkman, and Shapiro (2000) confirmed that when a team member is perceived as a member of the in-group, collectivist team members evaluated them more generously than did individualistic team members. Moreover, the collectivistic team member placed a higher value on contributions

that promote relationship maintenance, while individualistic team members placed a higher value on actions that contributed to completion of the task at hand. In essence, members who ascribe to the collectivistic cultures normally make a clear distinction between the in-group and out-group members in order to develop and maintain relationship among them. On the other hand, members who ascribe to the individualistic culture make less distinction between those two types of memberships because their concern is placed primarily on the tasks to be carried out first, then only relationship building.

Applying a Cross-Cultural Theoretical Framework

In this section, we present several key cultural dimensions introduced by cross-cultural theorists Hall (1976), Hofstede (1980), and Trompenaars (1994). Each of these three theorists has introduced a number of cultural dimensions. Hall identified three cultural dimensions, namely, space, language, and time. Hofstede developed five cultural dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, femininity vs. masculinity, and quality vs. quantity of life. Building on these two theories, Trompenaars defined seven dimensions: universal vs. particular, individualism vs. collectivism, affective vs. neutral, specific vs. diffuse, ascription vs. performance, sequential vs. synchronous (orientation to past, present, or future), and control vs. success. With respect to the formation of swift trust within GVTs from a cultural perspective, we will look at only three dimensions: high vs. low context, individualism vs. collectivism, and affective vs. neutral. Only these dimensions were selected based on their relevance to exploring the impact of cultural values on building swift trust in GVTs.

Hall (1976): Low Context vs. High Context

Intercultural communication theorist Hall (1976) introduced a cultural dimension called "context." We discuss the concept "context" based on its two extremes, high context and low context, but it is useful to bear in mind that context is a continuum and despite their cultural backgrounds people can fall anywhere along the continuum from high to low context. Defined briefly, context explains messages that are either implied through nonverbal means or verbally written or spoken. In a "context culture" (high context) people depend largely on nonverbal cues, either demonstrated by the other person's behavior or words, to fully interpret messages. Words used oftentimes are indirect, tactful, polite, and ambiguous. Conversely, in a "content culture" (low context), messages are directly interpreted from the words either written or spoken. Words used are direct, succinct, and specific. High context people value relationship building before they collaborate or work together. They feel that knowing others at an interpersonal level will facilitate their understanding

and interpretation of the messages they receive (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Nonverbal cues such as body language, tone of voice, facial expression, and gestures are important elements for effective intercultural communication. The information cues used by low context individuals, on the contrary, are different. They do not place much importance on relationship building; rather they prefer to conduct business or engage in collaboration through formal agreements such as written contracts between two parties. Their purpose in collaboration is strongly focused on the task to be achieved and not on relationships.

Hofstede (1980): Individualism vs. Collectivism

As an organizational and cross-cultural theorist, Hofstede (1980) has conducted hundreds of studies to examine the impact of cultural values on many aspects of organizational behaviors and management practices. He developed four cultural dimensions called power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, and masculinity vs. femininity. In this chapter, we use only one dimension, individualism vs. collectivism, to illustrate the impact of cultural values on swift trust formation in GVTs. The individualism vs. collectivism dimension explains the “sense of belonging” a person feels when it comes to job satisfaction and tasks. For example, collectivistic individuals normally prefer to work with familiar groups of people such as spouse, family, and close friends, previously defined as their in-group. They also feel more comfortable achieving their task through collective efforts. On the other hand, individualistic people thrive on single-handed or independent effort. Unlike collectivistic culture, the individualistic culture values autonomous thinking and thus they look more favorably on making individual decisions. On the other hand, consensus building is central to the nature of decision making processes in the collectivistic culture.

Trompenaars (1994): Neutral vs. Affective

Based on Hall’s and Hofstede’s work, Fons Trompenaars further elaborated the dimensions into seven cultural perspectives, some of which overlap. Once again we will use only one cultural dimension, in this case the one which is similar to the other two cultural theorists already mentioned. Hence, we chose Trompenaars’ cultural value of affective vs. neutral to illustrate the importance of in-group vs. out-group for swift trust formation. For example, a high context culture depends largely on collective efforts and high context individuals prefer to establish relationships with their teammates prior to taking up any tasks assigned to them. The “affective” element places a high value on relationship orientation. It becomes the crucial basis for trusting the other members of a team. Without it, collectivistic team members find it challenging to establish face-to-face trust, let alone virtual trust.

Conversely, people who place a greater emphasis on the “neutral” element much prefer to take into account only the task to be accomplished. Hence, the instrumental goal becomes the basis of virtual collaboration. What matters to the individualistic low context culture is that people can achieve reciprocal goals between tasks and personal interests (Zakaria, Stanton, & Sarkar-Barney, 2003).

The Impact of Culture on Building Swift Trust in Global Virtual Teams

Studies have shown that trust is a prerequisite to successful performance when people work together (Adler, 2007; Greenberg et al., 2007; Laat, 2005; Remidez, Stam, & Laffey, 2007; Young, 2006). According to Laat (2005), the conditions for and challenges to establishing trust differ depending on factors like social setting, identity, age, race, and gender. When we talk about trust in the distributed environment, the concept takes on a new meaning. Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999), suggested that “swift trust” is a more viable form of trust. Therefore, in order to develop swift trust, time is of the essence. GVTs that operate on an ad hoc basis wherein projects must be completed quickly need to formulate means or strategies to develop trust more quickly than in a face-to-face operation, so that performance can be enhanced or maintained. Yet, not all cultures can develop trust in a quick manner; some cannot unless the target of trust has strong “in-group” relationship. GVTs are assembled in a totally different manner from the more traditional face-to-face structure. In a distributed environment, teams not only need to deal with the use of various technologies, but must also acculturate and adapt to the diversity of cultural values present among team members. Team members must be culturally competent to work with others who may have totally divergent work practices and procedures. The combination of these two, technology and culture, sometimes create intense challenges to building effective teamwork at a distance. If developing swift trust in a distributed team is challenging, the formation of trust among team members with different cultural backgrounds becomes more so because social and personal expectations and sources of trust and credibility are all established in different ways (Mohd Yusof & Zakaria, 2012; Zuckerman & Higgins, 2002). The key question, then, is “How is swift trust affected by cultural values?”

In this chapter, we want to look at the phenomenon of “cultural impacts on the formation of swift trust in GVTs” and at the end, we will present three key propositions based on different cultural dimensions (refer to Table 11.1). Studies have shown that teams oftentimes face challenges in forming trust because they have different expectations, decision making process, communication styles, and preferences for collaboration and communication as well as different motivations for trusting the partners they work with (Adler, 2007; Greenberg et al., 2007; Jeffries & Reed, 2000). Interestingly, Jarvenpaa and Leidner’s (1999) findings showed that culture is an insignificant factor in predicting the perceived level of trust in GVTs. They allege that, in an electronic communication environment, culture is less

Table 11.1 Summary of propositions using three different cultural dimensions to explain the characteristics and meanings of in-group vs. out-group

High context vs. low context (Hall, 1976)	Collectivism vs. individualism (Hofstede, 1980)	Affective vs. neutral (Trompenaars, 1994)
Proposition 1a	Proposition 2a	Proposition 3a
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>High context</i> members use a direct, succinct communication style when communicating with people in their in-group • <i>High context</i> members prefer an indirect and ambiguous communication style with their out-group members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collectivistic</i> members focus on collective or group-oriented goals when performing their task • <i>Collectivistic</i> members use "We," "Us," and "Ours" when claiming team inputs and outcomes from members or representing their members, and any decisions will be referred to their leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Affective-oriented</i> members will prioritize relationship building when performing tasks in global virtual teams • <i>Affective-oriented</i> members need to establish good rapport to facilitate trust formation within members as it creates less anxiety and uncertainty
Proposition 1b	Proposition 2b	Proposition 3b
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Low context</i> members use a direct, precise communication style when communicating with in-group or out-group members, making little or no distinction between them • <i>Low context</i> members place a higher value on the nature of the job than on the nature of relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Individualistic</i> members focus on self-oriented goals when performing their task • <i>Individualistic</i> members commonly use "I," "Me," and "You" when discussing the tasks carried out; each team member is considered responsible and empowered to make decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Task-oriented</i> members are more concerned with the tasks, roles, and types of jobs in the team. Relationships are a secondary goal; only when the task has been completed is trust developed through relationships • <i>Task-oriented</i> members perceive trust as dependent on the quality of the performance and deliverables shown by team members

significant, whereas our research argues the opposite view (Amant, 2002; Cogburn & Levinson, 2003; Mohd Yusof & Zakaria, 2012; Zakaria, 2006). Hall (1976) argued that people who demonstrate high context communication behaviors rely primarily on the nonverbal aspects of messages and the contextual value of information. In this case, the relationship-building orientation takes precedence over task orientation. Questions such as who, what, when, why, and how need to be critically examined by researchers in order to build a trusting relationship among team members. The ability to develop trust in a relatively quick manner is strongly impacted by the different cultural values of each member.

One of the important aspects to consider in terms of cultural values is the concept of in-group vs. out-group. Family members, close friends, and colleagues, known as

the "in-group," are easier for high context members to build trust with as compared to strangers, the out-group members (Triandis et al., 1988). In an organizational context, such concepts can be translated into the need to work with people with whom one is comfortable and feels at ease. Hence, members need to establish rapport as soon as possible in the initial stage of team work because the concept of "in-group" reduces feelings of anxiety and uncertainty about unfamiliar persons: the more you know about a person, the further they move into your in-group and the less anxious you will be about trusting them (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1996). With little or no information about another person, it is hard to anticipate or predict the outcome of a relationship or shared goal. In this regard, "strangers" create more anxieties than those who are familiar or close to a person (i.e., belong to the in-group). Kanter (1977) provided similar observations about the issue of trust. She theorized that people would prefer someone similar to themselves, in the absence of other information (Stafsudd, 2006). In this respect, homogeneity is more likely to induce trust among teams than heterogeneity—for example, team members from the same cultural background vs. a team that includes one member from a different cultural background.

Low context communication behaviors, on the other hand, focus on task orientation rather than relationship building. What matters to low context people are the instrumental goals which they value more highly than the affective goals (e.g., relationships) when developing trust (Zakaria et al., 2003). However, such assertion is not fully understood in the context of GVT work environment; hence requiring researchers to further examine such phenomenon as proposed in this chapter. Kim et al. (1990) argue that individualistic cultures value task inputs over relationship building and maintenance. In other words, individualistic or low context people are less concerned with affective cues. Instead they are more concerned with effectiveness and efficiency in terms of tangible outcomes, such as completion of GVT tasks. Hofstede (1980) strongly believed that individualistic people are neither reliant on team memberships, nor dependent on harmonious and cohesive situations. Their goals are very objective, focusing on what tasks to accomplish and how best to do so. McClelland and Boyatzis (1984) therefore propose that individualistic managers do not thrive on personal affiliation, which is a necessary ingredient for collectivistic culture; what is more important is individual achievement and personal aspiration. Thus, swift trust that relies on task completion rather than on relationship building produces a better outcome for GVTs that ascribe to the individualistic culture. As summary, we encapsulate the discussions of cultural impacts on swift trust formation within GVTs with the following three (3) key propositions. Each proposition has two aspects in order to reflect each of the abovementioned cultural dimensions discussed.

Based on the abovementioned three (3) key propositions, we argue that the requirement to trust others during virtual collaboration is a new reality for GVTs which pose many culturally rooted challenges. Trust takes on a new perspective because teams need to develop it swiftly in order to maximize cross-organizational team performance across time and geographical distance. In this chapter, we argue that team members encounter challenges in developing swift trust due to diverse

cultural backgrounds; therefore we employ a cross-cultural theoretical lens to understand the impact of culture on swift trust formation. We propose that swift trust development is more challenging for high context individuals who value relationship building. In addition, cultural theorists also suggest that trust formation is facilitated for high context individuals when people belong to their in-group in organizations (i.e., close friends, colleagues, and spouse) rather than if the people are total strangers. On the opposite end of the spectrum, low context individuals who ascribe to individualism are more willing to develop swift trust if the goal is instrumental and the group is task oriented (focused on the task at hand).

Hence, there are two relevant questions: for the individualistic culture, it is "Can you work with me?" and for the collectivistic culture, it is "Can we work together?" These have implications for MNCs, and cultural values are thus a critical factor for organizations to consider when assembling GVTs because different cultures have different expectations, purposes, and objectives. Cultural values thus become an antecedent to the development of swift trust within GVTs. The following section provides recommendations and guidelines as to the "dos and don'ts" in managing GVTs and promoting the formation of swift trust within team members.

Recommendations and Guidelines for Global Virtual Teams

Currently, many global organizations utilize noncollocated teams because the distributed structure can reduce travel costs, expatriate training, and culture shock while at the same time increasing flexibility, mobility, and cross-border collaboration among members by removing barriers of time and distance. To successfully deploy GVTs, MNCs need to develop competencies among their employees that will encourage trusting behaviors among team members. MNCs need to ensure that their people receive cross-cultural training in order to enable them to build swift trust. In years past, teams might have had the luxury of taking their time to develop a trusting relationship among their members, learn about each other's behaviors, and build a shared historical work experience. That is not the case with GVTs. MNCs need to realize that without a quickly established trusting relationship between GVT members, they are unlikely to contribute fully and perform at their best on complex projects.

For example, a manager wishing to establish or manage a GVT must determine whether the cultural backgrounds of team members are homogenous or heterogeneous. Such knowledge will enable the manager to understand what is required for the global virtual cross-border team collaboration to be successful, because different cultures perceive trust and trustworthy behavior differently. MNCs need to develop culturally attuned strategies that incorporate cultural values of the heterogeneous members in GVTs. Since trust is the glue for effective performance, the compatibility of cultures must be accurately assessed and action taken to address any potential points of conflict. If team members are heterogeneous in nature, development of cross-cultural competencies is crucial. Moreover, Zakaria (2008)

and Chen and Starosta (2005) assert that cultural competencies include three different levels which are the awareness, affective, and behavioral. Different levels require different competencies. For example, team members first need to be educated so that they are aware of their own and others' cultural differences. Next, team members must be sensitized to each other's routines, norms, values, and attitudes. Lastly, team members must learn to identify and be sensitive to each other's cultural differences, which ideally will lead to modeling of the right cultural behaviors by all team members. To ensure that virtual cross-border collaboration in a GVT is successfully carried out, it is essential for MNCs to create a supportive organizational culture or climate. Top management must provide programs that enhance the creation of synergy between the diverse cultural backgrounds of GVT members, and learning to trust at a distance and on many levels—individual, team, and organizational—must be encouraged through the organizational culture.

Following are some of the key guidelines for MNCs wishing to develop culturally attuned strategies in managing GVTs and forming swift trust within teams. The guidelines include ways to promote swift trust for high context members who ascribe to collectivistic cultural values and appreciate a relationship-oriented basis for teamwork. The guidelines also address the needs of low context members with individualistic cultural values who place a high importance on task-oriented outcomes.

For High Context, Collectivistic, and Affective Cultures

1. **Credibility and Trustworthiness.** MNCs need to provide all team members with ample background information about each other in order to reduce uncertainties and anxieties about who they will be working with. This information will also help establish a sense of the trustworthiness of the members.
2. **Rapport Building.** Leaders need to hold a warm-up session—a “getting-to-know you” session early in the forming of the team, for example, a face-to-face or video-conferencing meeting to give team members a chance to actually see each other's faces and observe nonverbal cues.
3. **Social-Based Technology.** Leaders need to be creative in designing a warm and user-friendly work environment using technology. For example, they may wish to use Web 2.0 communication tools like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, and so on, to ensure constant and effective communication among team members.
4. **Nonavoidance Approach to Conflict Resolution.** Leaders need to intervene when members experience conflicts. Members from a high context culture will use either avoidance or a nonconfrontational strategy once they trust their colleagues. The ability to resolve conflicts in a collegial manner is crucial for maintaining a harmonious relationship. If conflicts arise, members may need an intermediary to arbitrate the issue.
5. **Consensus Decision Making.** The decision making process is based on two key aspects: hierarchical roles and consensus. Thus, high context members generally refer to their leader for a final decision since they are accustomed to follow

bureaucratic procedures or seek the approval of other team members. Members feel more secure receiving instructions on what to do from their leaders, since they will then not be responsible for the success or failure of the outcome. Thus, it is suggested when members are led by a high context leader, they should expect two circumstances: leader will make the final decision or the process will be based on a consensus-style decision making.

For Low Context, Individualistic, and Instrumental Cultures

1. **Reliability and Performance.** Provide clear goals and timelines so that these team members can plan, organize, and coordinate their tasks. Members also need to understand the credibility of their fellow team members, e.g., know something about their past performance, in order to assess their reliability and the quality of their work.
2. **Task Orientation.** Leaders need to ensure tasks are clearly identified and delegated to team members. Members need to feel that they have ownership in terms of performing the task assigned to them.
3. **Technology Efficiency.** Leaders need to ensure that the technology used is efficient and effective so that communication is smooth. When communication is effective among members, work is more likely to be delivered on time and on budget.
4. **Confrontational Conflict Resolution.** If conflicts arise, leaders need to think strategically about how to manage it. Often times, the best strategy is to seek a win-win result wherein members deliberate on the best outcome and arrive at a solution that satisfies all parties. Low context culture individuals tend to confront others directly and express their disagreements in an open manner, preferring to deal directly with the affected individual rather than employing a mediator.
5. **Empowerment in Decision Making.** Since individualistic cultures operate based on self-reliant thinking and autonomous decision making, members of this culture need to feel empowered in decision making. They cannot be told what to do for the sake of following or complying with what others are doing.

Conclusion and Future Research Directions

As a theoretical contribution of the chapter, in essence, we propose that swift trust formation is more challenging for individuals who operate in a virtual work structure than in a face-to-face work environment. Such challenges are further intensified when the team members possess heterogeneous cultural backgrounds. In this study, we use several theoretical lenses to explain the phenomenon of swift trust formation in GVTs. GVTs as a topic of interest are found in several bodies of literature, including information systems, cross-cultural management, international business,

and organizational behavior. However, to date, this body of literature seems to have looked at this topic in an isolated manner, failing to weave the findings into a coherent whole that yields a concrete explanation of the ways in which GVTs form swift trust. By using several different cultural theoretical lenses, our research will provide an understanding that integrates these various fields of study.

Hence, to summarize, the overarching research question is, "How do cultural values impact the formation of swift trust within global virtual teams?" We use several cultural dimensions to offer propositions that clearly state the impact of culture on formation of swift trust within GVTs. As previously mentioned, building virtual trust itself is difficult; how much more so to develop swift trust in a short time frame and with strangers. The barriers to trusting strangers are deeply rooted in a person's cultural background. Thus, we present four key questions for shaping the direction of future work in understanding swift trust formation in GVTs, as follows:

- What are the culturally rooted challenges that team members face in developing swift trust in a virtual work structure?
- What are the antecedents to, and consequences of, the success or failure of swift trust development in a virtual work structure?
- Is the process of swift trust formation undergoing a process similar to face-to-face team developmental stages? If not, what is the process that individuals from different cultural backgrounds learn to trust one another?
- How does swift trust facilitate the effectiveness of GVTs?

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