Online Communication in the Digital Age
Prof. Rashmi Gaur
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology
Lecture – 15
Teamwork and Global Considerations

Good morning dear friends and welcome to this module. Today we shall discuss the dynamics of teamwork in digital environments, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and global awareness in fostering collaboration and in delivering clear and impactful technical content to a diverse as well as a worldwide audience. Collaboration plays a fundamental and essential role in teamwork. It refers to the collective effort of individuals working together towards a common goal or objective. For instance, instruction manuals, which cover various products, involve inputs from a diverse team consisting of technical writers like engineers, graphic artists, subject matter experts, reviewers and lawyers, etc.

Teamwork and Project Management

- Complex documents, such as long reports, proposals, and manuals, are usually the result of collaborative efforts rather than the work of a single individual.

  – Effective collaboration distributes responsibility and harnesses diverse skills to achieve collective goals, *relieving individuals of excessive burdens.*

  – Collaboration leverages *diverse backgrounds and skills*, fostering innovation and improved decision-making through varied perspectives *that reveal blind spots* and offer alternative approaches.

  – Collaboration allows teams to *optimize resource utilization*. By coordinating efforts, teams can allocate resources efficiently, minimize waste, and maximize productivity.
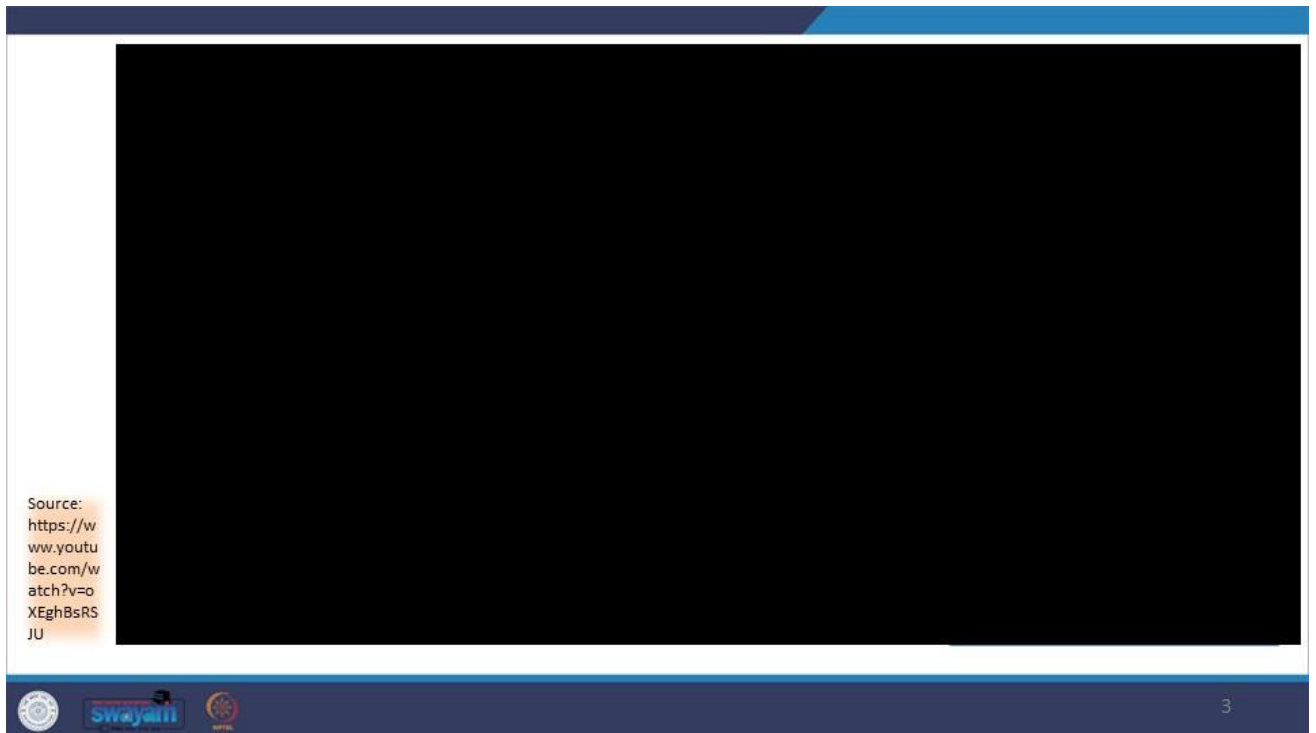
TEAM WORK

Source: www.shutterstock.com

Effective Collaboration also distributes responsibilities and harnesses diverse skills efficiently.

It also relieves individuals of excessive burdens and decision-making by a single person. It also promotes diverse backgrounds and skills, fostering innovation. These types of team works also reveal the blind spots and offer alternative and more creative approaches. Collaboration also allows teams to optimize resource utilization.

By coordinating efforts, they can allocate resources efficiently, minimize the waste and maximize the productivity also. The upcoming video illustrates these aspects effectively. It provides a thorough understanding of the individual and combined meanings of teamwork and collaboration.

Source:
https://w
ww.youtu
be.com/w
atch?v=o
XEghBsRS
JU

Hello, I would like to talk with you about the two expressions teamwork on the one hand and collaboration on the other hand. So we might think that teamwork is just a, let's say, more fashionable expression for collaboration and that they both mean the same.

But actually that is not the case. So if we distinguish teamwork from collaboration, that means that in a teamwork environment, we have to have a team leader. And in the collaboration environment, people also work together in a team, but they do not have a team leader. Nevertheless, both teamwork and collaboration require leadership. But the leadership that is done in the teamwork by one person, the team leader, has to be done on the collaboration setting by the team members themselves.

So these people have to have the, let's say, personal maturity. They have to be able to accept that there might be one first among equals. And they have to be able to recognize

conflicts, to deal with conflicts, to do controlling and everything, all this without having really a team leader. In the teamwork environment, that team leader has to be, of course, somebody who has the personality and let's say the attitude of leadership on the one hand and also the qualification or the abilities, the knowledge to lead, so that people have to know how to lead. Very often that is already one challenge.

  So in a lot of teams, we have somebody who is, let's say, defined to be the team leader, but that person doesn't have the attitude nor the qualification, or at least one of these two is missing. And so if you want to have people working together in a team, you have to decide, do you want to have teamwork? But that requires a team leader. Who is that team leader? Is it you? Is it somebody else? Does that person have the skills? And if you decide for the collaboration environment, then please make sure that you have those people having the personal maturity, having the ability to recognize and deal with conflicts. Collaborative teams routinely evaluate processes and performance to boost effectiveness. And therefore, they can excel in continuous improvement, feedback systems and knowledge sharing.

  Additionally, collaborative teams display adaptability in responding to changing priorities or work related challenges.

Guidelines for Collaborative Project

- Appoint a group manager : The manager assigns tasks, enforces deadlines, conducts meetings, consults with supervisors, and "runs the show."

- Compose an audience and purpose statement that spells out the project's goal and the plan for achieving the goal. Be sure each member understands the goal.

- Identify the type of document required with regard to its format, supplementary material, objectives and intended audience. Divide the tasks according to their phases, requirements and group dynamics.

- Establish a timetable. Gantt and PERT charts help the team visualize the whole project as well as each part, along with start-up and completion dates for each phase.
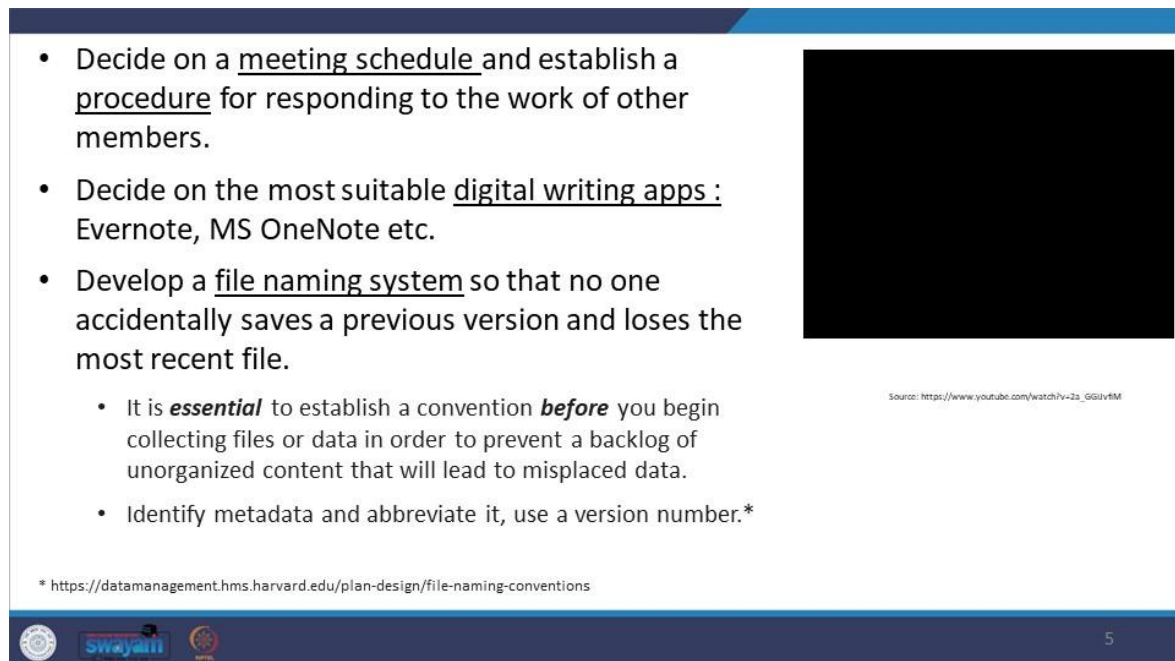
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a_GGilvfiM

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In any collaborative project, one has to begin by appointing a group manager. The manager is able to assign the task and force the deadlines, also conducts meetings, etc. and may communicate in an upward and downward manner efficiently. Secondly, we have to think of who the audience are going to be and also compose a purpose statement

that would clarify the goal to the team members.

  We should also be able to decide on the type of document which is required, particularly about the format, the supplementary material which is required, the objectives and how to align them with different subsections of the audience. And accordingly, we have to think of task division. We should also establish a timetable and adhere to it. Preparation of Gantt chart and PERT charts help the team in visualization the whole project as well as each part independently. In a collaborative project, the manager plays a pivotal role in coordinating and integrating the efforts of team members.

  Besides, goal-oriented projects are essential for providing focus, direction and motivation, increasing the chances of the success of the project.

- Decide on a meeting schedule and establish a procedure for responding to the work of other members.
- Decide on the most suitable digital writing apps : Evernote, MS OneNote etc.
- Develop a file naming system so that no one accidentally saves a previous version and loses the most recent file.
  - It is *essential* to establish a convention *before* you begin collecting files or data in order to prevent a backlog of unorganized content that will lead to misplaced data.
  - Identify metadata and abbreviate it, use a version number.*

* https://datamanagement.hms.harvard.edu/plan-design/file-naming-conventions

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a_GGiJvfiM

Certain other details we have to focus on is to prepare a meeting schedule and establish the procedure for responding to the work of other members. We should also decide on the most suitable digital writing apps with which every team member is comfortable. For example, are we going to use Evernote, MSOneNote, etc. or any other one.

  We should also develop a file naming system so that no one accidentally saves a previous version and loses the most recent file. It is essential therefore to establish a convention before we begin collecting files or data in order to prevent a backlog of unorganized content that will lead to misplaced data. We should also be able to identify metadata and abbreviate it also preferably using a version number. We should also establish procedures for dealing with interpersonal problems and a group decision making style.

According to Rowe and Boulgaride's decision style theory or DST.

Decision making styles work along two different axes. The first is cognitive complexity and the other is value orientation. Cognitive complexity refers to the decision maker's tolerance for ambiguity and value orientation refers to the priorities of the decision maker. Combining these two creates four decision making styles, directive decision makers, analytic decision makers, behavioral decision makers and conceptual decision makers. The visual on the right hand side illustrates these points briefly.

Cognitive complexity suggests that people with a lower tolerance tend to decide by considering a few clearly defined options. While those who have a better tolerance for ambiguity are likely to explore novel and less defined options. Value orientation suggests that people who value technical outcomes or task based outcomes tend to decide by considering which options will lead to the best measurable results. On the other hand, those who prefer social outcomes like group harmony are more likely to ask stakeholders what they think and focus on guiding the group towards consensus. Directive decision makers have a low tolerance for ambiguity and a technical value orientation.

Analytic decision makers have a high tolerance for ambiguity and a technical value orientation. Behavioural decision makers have a low tolerance for ambiguity and a social value orientation. Whereas conceptual decision makers have a high tolerance for ambiguity and a social value orientation.

- Decide <u>how to evaluate</u> each member's contribution and encourage members to keep a <u>journal</u> of personal observations for the overall evaluation of the project.
  - Digital journals help to declutter, convenient use of images, ease in approaching.
- Prepare a project management plan.
  - Processes to manage projects in digital space.
  - While the domain of the project might be different than traditional project management such as construction; the goals and objectives are the same.
- Keep this document in a shared space and update it only if all team members agree.

Source: https://psyche.co/guides/how-to-plan-a-research-project-in-four-clear-steps

While working in a team, particularly working in a team which is placed in remote places, we should also decide in advance how to evaluate each member's contribution and encourage members to keep a journal of personal observations for the overall evaluation of the project. Digital journals help to declutter and through them we can also upload images in a more convenient manner and they can also be approached by other members easily.

We should also prepare a project management plan. Processes to manage projects in digital spaces are important and while the domain of the project might be different than traditional project management such as construction, the goals and objectives remain the same. This document has to be kept in a shared space and it should be updated if only all the team members agree to it. Thus we can say that collaboration is a cornerstone of effective teamwork. It promotes synergy, innovation and efficient problem solving.

Teamwork: Virtual and Face to Face

- Meetings are typically scheduled for two primary purposes: exchanging information and making decisions.
  - Informational meetings generally run smoothly since there is less potential for disagreement.
- Despite the wide array of digital collaboration tools available, face-to-face meetings continue to be vital because of the valuable interpersonal connection they offer.
  - Furthermore, meetings that involve a mix of in-person and virtual participation can pose particular challenges.
  - Ensuring that remote participants have an equal voice and are fully engaged can be a challenge.
  - Creating etiquette and logistics for hybrid meetings is essential to ensure effective communication in situations like these.

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWQ_8Ctvz0Y

Meetings are typically scheduled for two primary purposes, exchanging information and making decisions. Informational meetings generally run smoothly since there is less potential for disagreement and we have to accept that despite the wide array of digital collaboration tools which are available to us today, our face to face physical meetings still continue to be vital because of the valuable interpersonal connection they do offer. Furthermore, meetings that involve a mix of in person and virtual participation can pose different types of challenges. We have to ensure that remote participants are given an equal representation and their voice is heard with equal significance and they are kept to be fully engaged continually. We should also try to create etiquette and logistics for hybrid meetings which is essential to ensure effective communication in some situations where the time zone differences also exist.

The team leader must ensure that the agenda is circulated well in advance and that the discussion adheres to it strictly. One should also ensure that all participants, whether physically present or joining remotely, have equal opportunities to contribute and their contribution is equally acknowledged.

Decision Making: Organizations increasingly use data analytics and business intelligence tools to make informed, evidence-based decisions.

- *Digital tools* enable decentralized decision-making within organizations, promoting faster responses and increased agility by empowering employees to make decisions in their areas of responsibility.

- *AI and automation* enhance decision-making by processing large datasets, identifying patterns, and suggesting optimal actions, with particular relevance in areas such as customer support, supply chain management, and financial analysis.

- *Agile methodologies* stress iterative and adaptive decision-making, with teams frequently reevaluating priorities and adapting strategies to changing circumstances.
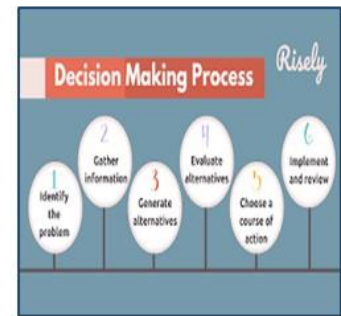
Source: www.risely.me

In the context of decision making, we find that organizations are increasingly using data analytics and business intelligence tools to make evidence based and informed decisions. Digital tools enable decentralized decision making within organizations and they promote faster responses. AI and automation also enhance decision making by processing large data sets, identifying patterns and suggesting optimal actions with particular relevance to areas such as customer support, supply chain management and financial analysis.

Agile methodologies in the digital world stress iterative and adaptive decision making with teams frequently evaluating priorities and adapting strategies in changing and challenging circumstances. Digital environments encourage transparency and enhance accountability. They also facilitate global collaboration among culturally diverse team members. Decisionmakers must also consider aspects of cybersecurity, updating technological know-how of the participants and ethical implications in order to navigate the uncertainty prevalent in digital work environments.

Minutes: Recording of Minutes

- Meeting minutes are a concise summary of meeting discussions and decisions, including agenda items, actions, and outcomes with the option for rotation-based note-taking and prompt distribution for review.

- *Digital meeting minutes are searchable and taggable*, simplifying information retrieval and improving organization through keyword categorization.

- Digital minutes can *incorporate multimedia elements* like hyperlinks, attachments, and embedded files, enriching the content with additional context or resources.

- Advanced digital tools may provide analytics and insights on meeting effectiveness, including participation metrics, action item tracking, and sentiment analysis.

What are good minutes?
- Accurate
- Clear
- Concise
- Timely

Source: www.peritumagri.co

Recording of minutes after every meeting is also important.

   Digital meeting minutes are searchable and taggable and they simplify the retrieval of information and also improve the organization through keyword categorization. Digital minutes can also incorporate multimedia elements like hyperlinks, attachments and embedded files which enrich the content with additional context or resources at a later stage. Advanced digital tools may provide analytics and insights on meeting effectiveness including participation metrics, action item tracking and sentiment analysis. Storing the minutes in the cloud also ensures easy universal access for updated information from different locations and devices. Digital tools also enable real-time collaboration on meeting minutes allowing multiple participants to edit and comment simultaneously enhancing accuracy and efficiency.

   These tools often integrate with calendars for automatic scheduling, version control for tracking changes and security features like encryption and access controls. Some tools also offer automation to extract meeting information from recordings or transcripts while distribution via email or collaboration platforms and mobile accessibility further improve flexibility and they also reduce the paper usage. Encouraging creative thinking is also crucial for collaborative team projects. It encourages innovative ideas and helps in reaching more effective decisions.

Creative Thinking

- Instead of adhering strictly to a top-down project plan, teams benefit from dedicating time to engage in creative thinking, which can uncover ideas that may not have emerged through linear thinking.

  - Enables to find innovative solutions to digital communication challenges, such as designing user-friendly interfaces, creating impactful marketing campaigns, or optimizing website user experience.

  - Creative visuals, storytelling, and multimedia elements help convey messages more effectively, making digital communication more persuasive and memorable.

  - In a crowded digital space, creativity sets brands and content apart, making them more distinctive and recognizable.

Source: www.thebalancemoney.com

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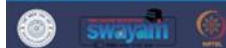
Creativity challenges a strict adherence to a top-down project plan.

  It enables to find innovative solutions to digital communication challenges such as designing better user-friendly interfaces, creating more effective marketing campaigns or optimizing website user experiences. Similarly the use of creative visuals, storytelling and multimedia elements can help in conveying messages more effectively. In a crowded digital space creativity sets brands and content apart making them more distinctive and recognizable by the potential customers. Creative content also forges emotional connections with the audience fostering engagement and deeper relationships.

Brainstorming is another tested way.

Within the framework of digital technologies it is conducted using the remote team collaboration effectively. We have to choose digital collaboration tools that support brainstorming such as virtual whiteboards, Miro or Mural or video conferencing platforms like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Video conferencing platforms like Google Hangouts facilitate virtual meetings, document uploading and real-time editing. Shared documents such as those available through Google Drive enable simultaneous contribution and real-time discussion of ideas via a chat window which allows participants to engage in ongoing conversations. Brainstorming fosters divergent thinking by encouraging unconventional ideas without a judgmental attitude.

Additionally features like track changes in word processing programs enable a back and forth brainstorming process.

- Mind-mapping is a structured technique used to help individuals visualize complex information, relationships, and ideas.
- By using visual cues and associations, mind-mapping helps people better understand, remember, and communicate information, making it a valuable tool for various tasks, from project management to creative thinking.
- Popular mind mapping software includes MindMeister, XMind, Coggle, and MindManager, among others.
    - Users can incorporate multimedia elements such as images, icons, links, and attachments into their mind maps to enhance understanding and creativity.

Source: https://youtu.be/oY4sUQzXJ1g?feature=shared

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Mind mapping is a structured technique used to help individuals visualize complex information, relationships and ideas. By using visual cues and associations, mind mapping helps people better understand, remember and communicate information, making it a valuable tool for various tasks from project management to creative thinking. Popular mind mapping software includes MindMeister, Xmind, Cogel and MindManager among others. Users can incorporate multimedia elements such as images, icons, links and attachments into their mind maps to enhance understanding and creativity.

Some software offers pre-designed templates for various purposes like project planning, brainstorming, etc. Certain softwares also provide tools for root cause analysis, aiding in problem solving. Mind mapping fosters radiant thinking by allowing ideas to branch outward from a central node and it promotes a non-linear and associative thinking. Its hierarchical structure accommodates organization of complex information. It actively engages both brain hemispheres, enhancing creativity and holistic thinking.

Another concept we shall discuss now is storyboarding. Storyboarding visually represents project structures by jotting down ideas and sketches on index cards which are then displayed by collaborative feedback, additions, deletions and refinements. Storyboarding is a fundamental technique in storytelling whether for films, animations, marketing campaigns or user experience design and it helps in creating engaging narratives. Presentation software like PowerPoint or Google Slides and video and movie software such as Apple's iMovie can also be used to create a storyboard arrangement of images and ideas in a linear sequence. Storyboards organize visual sequentially making them ideal for illustrating timelines, processes and narratives.

Some online tools offer automation features such as automatic alignment and arrangement of elements, saving time during the creation process. Handwriting to typing conversion tools are also available. Online software can accommodate growing project needs and team sizes by providing scalable solutions. Storyboards also facilitate feedback and revisions in the planning phase. Once finalized, storyboards also serve as production blueprints.

Reviewing and Editing

- Documents produced collaboratively should undergo a thorough review and extensive editing.

- Reviewing involves assessing a document with regard to its intended audience, purpose, and technical accuracy.
  - A reviewer provides feedback to the writer, highlighting what improvements are required.
  - Checklists throughout the text offer specific criteria for reviewing different types of documents to streamline the content.
  - Review should prioritize accuracy and a reader-friendly structure, emphasizing clear and captivating writing style.
  - Additionally, effective use of visuals and page design enhances document impact.

Revision and Editing

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_x8ZbsCU4c

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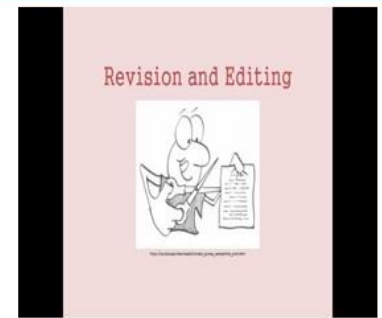
Documents which are produced in a collaborative manner should also undergo a thorough review and extensive editing. Reviewing involves assessing a document with regard to its intended audience, purpose and technical accuracy. A reviewer provides feedback to the individual writer or to the team and may suggest improvements which are required. Checklists throughout the text offer specific criteria for reviewing different types of documents to streamline the content from the audience perspective. A reviewer must prioritize accuracy and a reader friendly structure.

Additionally, effective use of visuals and page design can also enhance the impact of the document and it can also be suggested during the process of review and editing. We should also check citations if needed for proper formatting and ensure hyperlinks leads to the intended destinations. And of course, we should remember the deadlines.

- Editing tasks involve rephrasing or restructuring sentences, providing clarity to topic sentences, selecting more suitable vocabulary and expressions, and rectifying errors in spelling, usage, punctuation, and mechanics.
  - Tracking versions, managing revisions, and coordinating feedback from multiple reviewers in a digital environment can be complex, potentially resulting in confusion and conflicting suggestions.
  - Technical glitches, accessibility oversights, and compatibility issues with software or file formats can disrupt editing, potentially excluding readers and impacting the document's layout and content.
  - Maintaining consistency in lengthy or complex documents, preventing miscommunication among reviewers, and mitigating distractions in digital environments can be challenging, impacting the quality of edits.
  - Protecting document integrity and security when sharing it online is crucial to prevent unauthorized access or alterations.

Revision and Editing

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_x8ZbsCU4c

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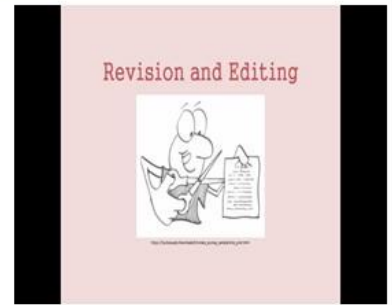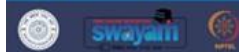
Editing tasks also involve the writing aspects of the document. They involve rephrasing, restructuring of the sentences, providing clarity to topic and sentences, selecting a better or more suitable vocabulary and expressions and rectifying spelling errors, consistency of the usage, punctuation and other writing mechanics also.

The design of the page as well as the similarity of the font size, mentioning of the abbreviations, etc., mentioning of the weights, etc. is also to be ensured during the review process. Tracking versions, managing revisions and coordinating feedback from multiple reviewers in a digital environment is definitely complex. It may also result into confusion and conflicting suggestions and therefore, even at this level, the coordination is a must.

Technical glitches and compatibility issues with software or file formats can also disrupt editing. Maintaining consistency in lengthy or complex documents, preventing miscommunication among reviewers and mitigating distractions in digital environments can also be challenging and can impact the quality of edits. At the same time, protecting the integrity and security of the document while sharing it online is also crucial to prevent unauthorized access or the possibility of any alterations in it. In digital technical communication, where information is often disseminated electronically, these editing and review processes become even more critical to maintain the integrity and quality of the content.

Identifying and Managing Conflicts

- In collaborative groups, conflicts can arise due to variations in personality, working styles, commitment levels, standards, and the ability to handle criticism.
  - Disagreements may occur regarding the group's goals, task allocation, or decision-making authority.
  - Some individuals may struggle to express their opinions due to intimidation or hesitation.
  - These conflicts can be further exacerbated when interactions take place exclusively online, as the lack of personal contact hinders the development of trust.

WORKPLACE CONFLICT
5 Culprits of Workplace Conflict

Source: www.sketchbubble.com

 Another aspect which we have to be aware of is that in collaborative online groups, conflicts may arise due to variations in personality, working styles, commitment levels, standards and the ability to handle criticism.
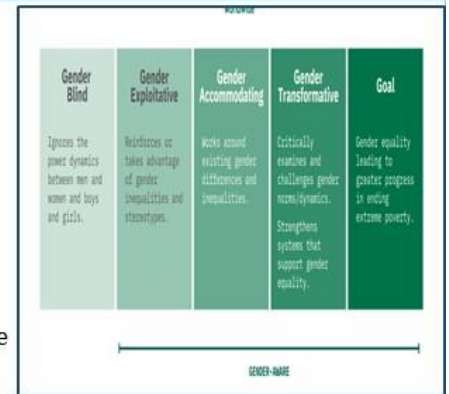
  These agreements may also occur owing to one's perception of the group's goal, task allocation or the final authority regarding decision making, etc. Some individuals struggle habitually to express their opinions, whereas some are more dominating. Lack of personal contact in online digital communication may also hinder the development of trust amongst the coworkers. In the previous module, we had looked at the dynamics of workplace communication and potential conflicts that can emerge within groups. We had also examined concepts such as groupthink and social loafing.

  Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that in the global workplace, broader factors like gender and cultural diversity also assume significance.

Gender Differences: Conscious/unconscious gender biases in digital communication can affect message reception and decision-making, potentially leading to less credibility for ideas/suggestions from other gender/s.

- Gender-based criticism or harassment, including sexist comments or jokes, can cause discomfort and distress among team members and escalate conflicts.
    - Both men and women may prefer an indirect management style, yet female managers often face more challenges to their authority.
    - Discussions related to compensation or promotions, which can occur in digital channels, may reveal gender disparities and lead to conflicts over fairness and equality.
- Conflicts may arise if gender sensitivity training is not adequately implemented or if team members are resistant to addressing gender-related issues.

Gender Blind	Gender Exploitative	Gender Accommodating	Gender Transformative	Goal
Ignores the power dynamics between men and women and boys and girls.	Reinforces or takes advantage of gender inequalities and stereotypes.	Works around existing gender differences and inequalities.	Critically examines and challenges gender norms/dynamics. Strengthens system that support gender equality.	Gender equality leading to greater progress in ending extreme poverty.

GENDER-AWARE

Source: www.concern.net

Conscious or unconscious gender biases in digital communication can affect the reception of the message, decision making and may potentially lead to less credibility for ideas or suggestions presented by people belonging to different genders. Gender-based criticism or harassment, including sexist comments or jokes, can cause discomfort and distress among team members and escalate conflicts further. Both men and women may prefer an indirect management style, yet female managers often face more challenges to their authority. Discussions related to compensation or promotions which can occur in digital channels may reveal gender disparity and lead to conflicts over fairness and equality.

  If gender sensitivity training is not adequately implemented or if team members themselves are resistant to addressing gender-related issues, conflicts may arise and further escalate. Imbalances in digital discussions with men often dominating and women experiencing more interruptions may disrupt communication and give rise to conflicts. Additionally, gender disparities in remote work conditions, including resource access and flexibility can trigger conflicts centered on work-life balance and fairness concerns.

Linguistic and Cultural Differences: Bi-linguism and Multiculturalism

- Digital communication diverges from traditional modes of communication in its relinquishment of top-down control, informal use of cross language interaction and widespread adoption of diverse semiotic and stylistic modes, genres and resources, such as images, music, sound and visual effects (Darvin, 2016).*

- Language disparities can impede effective communication, particularly when team members have varying levels of English proficiency or speak different languages.

  - Digital communication is an immense shared space - complex linguistic and communicative practices evolve without involving direct physical co-existence. It is a co-existence in a shared "cybernetic" third space, formulated by unknown hierarchies, an unknown number of contributors and unknown identities.

In our era of bilingualism and multiculturalism, we find that linguistic and cultural differences can also lead to certain difficulties. Digital communication diverges from traditional modes of communication in its relinquishment of top-down control, informal use of cross-language interaction and widespread adoption of diverse, semiotaken stylistic modes, genres and resources such as images, music, sound and visual effects.

Language disparities can also impede effective communication, particularly when team members possess varying levels of English proficiency or speak different versions of the English language. Digital communication is an immensely shared space. It is full of complexities in linguistic and communicative practices which evolve without involving direct physical coexistence. It is a coexistence in a shared cybernetic third space formulated by unknown hierarchies and unknown number of contributors and unknown identities. I would cite a 2021 research published in Harvard Business Review by byVasyl Taras, Dan Baack, Dan Caprar, Alfredo Jiménez and Fabian Froese.

The title of the research is how cultural difference can impact global teams. The researchers mentioned two broad categories of differences in global teams, personal diversity and contextual diversity. Language is a personal diversity like age, gender, etc. Contextual are the different levels of economic development and different types of institutions, political systems of different countries, etc. Connotative aspects of language become important in digital mediums.

If some team members are unequally fluent in the team's working language, they tend

to find it less enjoyable to spend time together and therefore trust each other less. As a result, they experience less cohesion and have more conflicts and misunderstandings. On the other hand, contextual diversity can positively affect task performance. When the team members come from different institutions, economic and political systems, they understand a wider range of contexts, have access to more diverse pools of knowledge and experiences. And as a result, contextual diversity allows for more views and different perspectives.

  It aids creativity, decision making and problem solving. Contextual diversity appears to be particularly beneficial when teams work on challenging tasks that require creative and unconventional approaches.

Source: https://www.slideteam.net/patterns-of-cultural-differences-training-ppt.html

 Conflicts can also arise from clashes in cultural perspectives, misinterpretation of cues and communication styles, stereotypes affecting perceptions differently and insensitive comments disregarding cultural customs of the other people. Varied cultural norms regarding hierarchy, decision making and conflict resolution can lead to clashes in team dynamics and difficulties in reaching consensus. Conflicts also arise when there are different perspectives on ethical issues or business practices potentially leading to ethical dilemmas to some members of the group. Political tensions or differences between countries can also spill over into workplace relationships and can aggravate conflicts.

  Differences in expectations regarding work-life balance where certain cultures emphasize extended work hours and others emphasize personal time may result in conflicts surrounding availability and work related obligations. Conflicts can also arise

from diverse cultural perspectives regarding our perceptions of punctuality and deadlines.

Disability Differences

- Digital platforms and communication tools may not be designed with accessibility in mind, making it difficult for individuals with disabilities to participate fully in digital discussions or access information.
  - Insufficient accommodations, such as closed captioning for videos or screen readers for text content, can exclude individuals with disabilities from engaging in digital communication effectively.
  - Conflicts may arise regarding resource allocation for disability accommodations, with some team members advocating for more support while others may resist additional costs or efforts.
- Organizations may face conflicts related to legal requirements for disability accommodations in digital communication, especially if they fail to meet legal obligations.

Disability Prevention Strategies

Job Sharing   Job Design   Job Rotation

EAP (Employee Assistance Program)   Flexible Work Arrangements

Source: ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub

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Our cultural coding regarding disability also may create differences in clashes. In some cultures we find that it would be difficult for people with disability to participate fully in digital discussions or access information. Insufficient accommodations such as closed captioning for videos or screen readers for text content can exclude individuals with disabilities from engaging in digital communication in an effective manner.

 Conflicts may also arise regarding resources allocation for disability accommodations with some team members advocating for more support while others may resist additional costs or efforts. Organizations may face conflicts related to legal requirements for disability accommodations in digital communication especially if they fail to meet legal obligations of a certain country. Common issues may include disabilities like speech or hearing impairments and unintentional biases against them.

It is also being found after research that in the digital realm conflicts can escalate quickly due to the fast-paced nature of communication through social media and mails etc. The perceived safety and relative anonymity of digital communication can lead individuals to overlook the potential impact their messages can have on different readers and therefore can spoil the overall effectiveness of the team.

If the team is primarily using only the written mode through different digital tools, the absence of non-verbal cues such as tone of voice and body language can make it challenging to gauge the emotional nuances during a conversation. Ethical concerns also surface due to conflicting messages in lean corporate environments which emphasize teamwork yet may reward individual achievements, potentially leading to unethical behavior like peer intimidation, mimicry and the use of bullying language. Etiquette Expert Ann Marie Sabath offers a valuable approach to address animosity within teams and workplaces. Her recommendation involves fostering a deeper understanding of the root cause behind aggressive behavior. Instead of engaging in a heated confrontation in the heat of the moment, it may be more effective to suggest setting aside time for a calmer and more focused conversation.
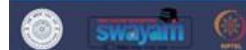
This approach allows all parties to express their concerns in a relatively calm manner.

The team leaders and also all the participants of the team should work towards mitigating the conflicts. To address personal differences effectively, it is crucial to encourage open expression of thoughts and feelings, handle disagreements in a constructive manner by offering and accepting criticism and seeking common ground with different views while avoiding a blaming attitude. Active listening which involves engaged participation rather than passive reception is essential for building positive relationships and gaining knowledge. Certain time-tested techniques like seeking clarification and summarizing the speakers key points are also equally helpful in the digital communication context.

Addressing conflicts related to cultural, gender and disability differences on a global scale requires a holistic and proactive approach. By promoting understanding, respect and inclusivity, organizations can create a harmonious and productive work environment where diversity is celebrated and conflicts are minimized.

- Create clear guidelines for inclusive digital communication, emphasizing *gender-neutral language* and respect for diverse perspectives, while also *promoting diversity and inclusion through policies and initiatives* that support gender equality and foster a respectful work environment.
    - Offer training in gender sensitivity, unconscious bias, respectful communication, and cross-cultural awareness to enhance awareness and reduce conflicts among team members.
    - Establish reporting mechanisms for gender-related issues, ensuring prompt and fair resolution, and create feedback mechanisms for addressing cultural issues and misunderstandings encountered by team members.
    - Back mentorship and sponsorship programs to promote women's career advancement and equal opportunities and appoint cultural liaisons within the team to facilitate communication and bridge cultural gaps.

PROCESS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION
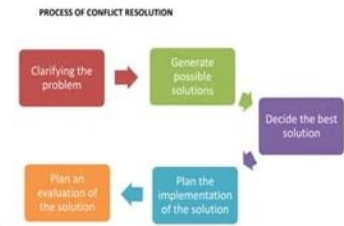
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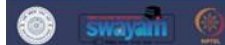
Organizations therefore promote the use of gender neutral language. They should also promote different approaches and trainings in promoting diversity and inclusion through different policies and initiatives. Proper training in the areas of gender sensitivity, we would be able to remove unconscious biases leading to a respectful communication.

We should establish reporting mechanisms not only for gender related issues but also for any other type of difficulty. We should also ensure prompt and fair resolution and create feedback mechanisms for addressing different types of cultural issues and misunderstandings. Organizations must also promote mentorship and sponsorship programs to promote women's career advancement and accommodate different gender priorities as well as cultural differences to promote inclusivity in their culture. In the upcoming video, we will look at a theoretical approach to resolving conflicts.

In 1974, researchers Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph Kilmann had conducted a study on workplace conflicts identifying five core conflict resolution methods. These methods laid the foundations for the Thomas Kilmann Conflict Model instrument which remains pertinent even now.
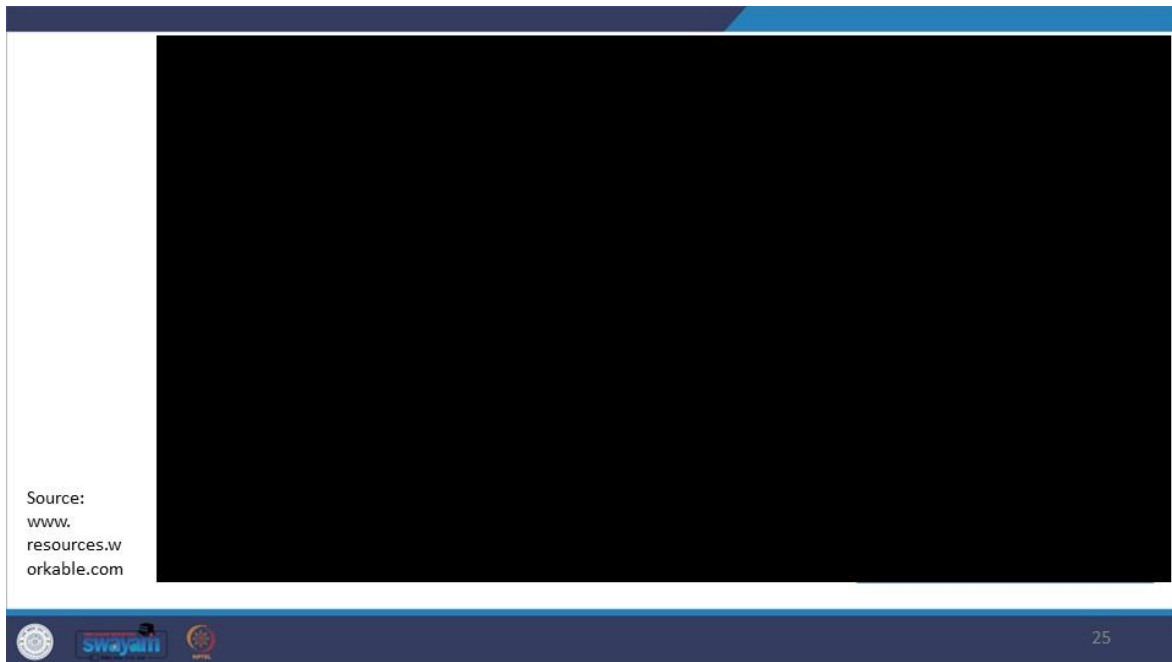
The TKI defines five approaches to resolving conflict. We will get to those in a minute.

There are also two dimensions of the model, assertiveness and cooperativeness. The TKI is designed to measure a person's behavior in conflict situations. Conflict situations are those in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible. In such situations, we can describe the individual's behavior along two dimensions, the continuums you see here. First assertiveness, the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns. And second, cooperativeness, the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

As I mentioned just a minute ago, there are five approaches that can be utilized to address workplace conflict. Competing where the goal is to win, collaborating where we work together to find a mutually beneficial solution, compromising where we find middle ground, avoiding where we hide from the conflict, and accommodating where we surrender our needs to please the other. Each of these five approaches are along both the assertiveness and cooperativeness continuums. The competing mode is at the top left of the model which means an individual takes a wholly assertive and uncooperative approach to resolving the conflict. It means standing up for your rights, defending the position in which you believe is correct, or simply trying to beat the other side.

An individual pursues his or her own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-oriented mode in which you use whatever power seems appropriate to win your own position. The collaborating mode is at the top right of the model which means an individual takes an assertive yet cooperative approach. It means being willing to believe that at an impasse, it's possible for both sides to come out with what they want.

Collaborating requires mutual respect, a willingness to listen to others, and creativity in finding solutions. Collaborating may take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights or trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.

  The compromising mode is at the center of the model because it's both assertive and cooperative but only to some extent. Both sides get something but not everything. The objective is to find an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. In some situations, compromising might mean splitting the difference between two positions, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground solution. The avoiding mode is at the bottom left of the model which means an individual takes an unassertive and uncooperative approach to conflict and they just don't deal with it.

  Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. Thus he or she does not deal with the conflict. And finally, the accommodating mode is at the bottom right of the model which means an individual takes a wholly unassertive and cooperative approach. This might take the form of selfless generosity, giving in to another person's orders when you would prefer not to or yielding to another person's point of view. When accommodating, an individual neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person.

  There is an element of self-sacrifice. Each of us is capable of using all five of these approaches or modes. None of us can be characterized by having a single style when dealing with conflict. But certain people use some modes or approaches better than others and therefore they tend to rely on those modes more heavily. Your conflict behavior in the workplace is a result of both your personal predispositions and the requirements of the situation you find yourself in. The TKI is designed to measure this mix of conflict handling modes and help you, your team and your organization better resolve workplace conflict.

  There is no one-size-fits-all approach to conflict resolution. Each method has its pros and cons depending on factors like personalities involved, hierarchical positions, urgency of the problem and interpersonal relationships. Managers cannot predict everyone's personalities, so adaptability is the key in choosing the right approach.

Effective teamwork in a global context is not just a desirable trait. It is an essential skill for success in today's interconnected world. The key factors that contribute to successful teamwork in a global setting include cultural awareness, effective communication and the ability to adapt and embrace diversity.

As we move forward in an ever-evolving global landscape, let us remember that teamwork knows no boundaries. It is a universal language that transcends geographical constraints and when executed thoughtfully and with a sensitivity to inclusivity, it has the power to bring about positive change and drive success on a global scale. In the next module, we will look at some more aspects related with virtual teams and effective presentation strategies. Thank you.