

Virtual Global Leadership Model: Exploratory Research of Leadership

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The Virtual Global Leadership model was originally created by Hui Ding, PhD. It will be explored as an original work. With the development of technologies and inadvertent business globalization, virtual office/teams are becoming a trend. This supports the need for the creation of a leadership model that encompasses the changing organization towards the multinational enterprise. In this model, a good leader needs to have the skills of leading change, building teamwork and partnership, global thinking, excellent cross-cultural communication skills, and intercultural awareness. Multinational corporations will find this model robust since their leaders must be effective at managing changing organizations in global economies. The global environments that businesses have competitive advantage are very complex. There are huge needs in global economies because companies need global leaders to lead diverse employees and understand different countries' political systems and business operations. All of these factors require leaders that are innovative thinkers and have the ability to adapt new technologies to the cultures in which they operate to remain competitive.

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1. Introduction

The Virtual Leadership model is a construct originally created by Hui Ding, Ph.D. It will be explored as an original work not yet published in an academic journal. Traditional leadership is face to face. However, with the development of technologies and business globalization, virtual office/team is becoming a trend. The global environments in which businesses have competitive advantage are very complex. These environments require global leaders who have unique skills to lead diverse employees and understand different countries' legal systems and business operations. This need supports the creation of a leadership model named as the virtual global leadership model. This model describes a global leader's required skills.

Although several articles have outlined certain qualities needed for global leaders, some articles reviewed Global leadership and other articles discussed virtual teams. These one topic articles appeared to be the different pieces to the puzzle of Virtual Global leadership. "Virtual Global Leadership" is the big picture and a complete model.

It addresses more risks and uncertainty that global leaders as managers face in global environments that requiring more skill. With advanced technology, global leaders need to have more understanding of the latest technology and have more innovative thinking as well.

In this paper, readers will be introduced to Ding's Virtual Global Leadership Model, to a review of literature regarding global leadership, to an explanation of the needs of virtual global leadership models and to Ding's research and discussion of the findings.

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Ding

The Virtual Global Leadership Model describes a global leader's required skills. In this model, a good leader needs to have the skills of leading change, building teamwork and partnership, global thinking, excellent cross-cultural communication skills, and intercultural awareness. The most important one which is central to the model is the innovative thinker.

2. Review of Literature

In reading several articles; there were a variety of concepts from the Virtual Leadership model discussed. Some articles discussed Global Leadership; other articles discussed virtual teams. Some articles solely covered a global mindset. These one topic articles, appeared to be the different pieces to the puzzle of Virtual Global Leadership. "Virtual Global leadership" is the big picture. It covers the global mindset, intercultural awareness, and cross-cultural communication skill; it does not only focus only on the distance influence, it also includes cultural influences. To address this gap in the literature the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence will be presented to uncover any discourse that exists.

Empirical evidence of the influence of culture at a distance addresses the impact of globalization. Several authors have researched the factors that influence virtual team effectiveness. Discussions of the gap in the literature of areas lacking research such as cultural competency in leadership effectiveness will be revealed. The argument for how the societal influence of organizational culture is lacking will further support the requirement for a model that embraces the absence of empirical studies. Theoretical foundations of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and McGregor's Theory X and Y will contribute to the analysis of how organizations have been viewed in the traditional context. Yet these theoretical foundations have not been researched for future implications for use in the global environment extensively in the literature, where cross cultural factors and virtual teams exist. Moreover, how leaders should be prepared to lead in this dynamic environment is not exhaustive.

This lack of empirical evidence and nontransparent application of theoretical foundations to the global environment warrants the requirement to review the literature for valuable contributions that could be made with the Ding Global Virtual Leadership model.

Empirical studies on globalization, technology, and culture in organizations

According to Davis & Bryant (2003), "Global virtual teams include members from multiple nations and cultures who must work together while being separated by time and space." The discussion is centered on leadership in global virtual teams and how distance influences the full range of leadership required at multiple levels of the organization."

Hunt (1991) offers that due to the inadequate testing and measurement of the criticality of cross cultural differences in leadership effectiveness, that it is difficult to convince practitioners of its positive impact on organizations. This is because culture is not treated as a multidimensional concept and constructs (Hofstede, 1991; 2001; Trompenaars, 1994), referenced by Hunt (1991). Validity and reliability are needed to better test and modify leadership constructs across cultures.

Ding

According to Hunt (1991), though Lord and Maher (1991) address in the development of arguments how leadership would shape and change organizational culture, there is little attention given to how societal culture impacts the perception process of followers.

Karp and Helgo (2008) suggests in quoting Hamel (2007), “the use of technology of management has peaked locally requiring that we coordinate a multitude of people without creating a burdensome hierarchy of overseers”. This supports the direct and control function of leaders. Leaders that understand systems as a whole can see the connections and foresee responses of people and therefore execute appropriate interventions. Ding (2013) has constructed such a whole system model for leaders to understand systems as a whole and not in parts like pieces of a puzzle, with interdependency and a systems thinking approach to Virtual Global leadership of organizations. The innovative thinker as the leader is at the center which poses a new way of looking at the leadership traits necessary to drive such a system effectively.

The post-managerial society that flat organizations evoke is what this model suggests and elevates leadership to the level of building relationships and trust with followers essential to organizational effectiveness and the new global mindset reflected in the Ding model. This leadership would require more of a team focus and a culture of synergy revealing the importance of research that validates culture and achieves reliable research outcomes.

Theoretical foundations in Virtual Global Leadership

As Karp and Helgo (2008) point out such development of theory in the social sciences given the complexity science disciplines development of their own theories, have not addressed anything comparable to the physical elements of natural science. Contrary to McGregor’s theory X and Y that suggests that leadership style is induced by organizational environments, the dimensions of consideration and initiation of structure as leadership style variables has been proven (Stogdill & Coons, 1957), Mannheim, Rim, and Grinberg (1967). Also Hunt and Liebscher (1973) showed that different work settings that differed in task structure and climate fostered differential leadership behavior as referenced by Singer & Singer, 1990.

The cost benefit process of transactional leadership is an exchange of rewards for services rendered. Such requires clarifying subordinates’ goals to offer rewards aligned with goal attainment. To the contrary, transformational leadership motivates subordinates to perform "beyond expectations." These outcomes are a result of the leader having accomplished heightening subordinates' awareness of the value of designated goals. By inducing them to transcend self-interest in favor of the organization, the subordinates' motivational level in terms of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is raised (Singer & Singer, 1990). The intercultural awareness and building of virtual and team partnerships that fulfills the recipient’s self-actualization, and personal belonging and love needs in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs ensues.

3. The Model and Methodology

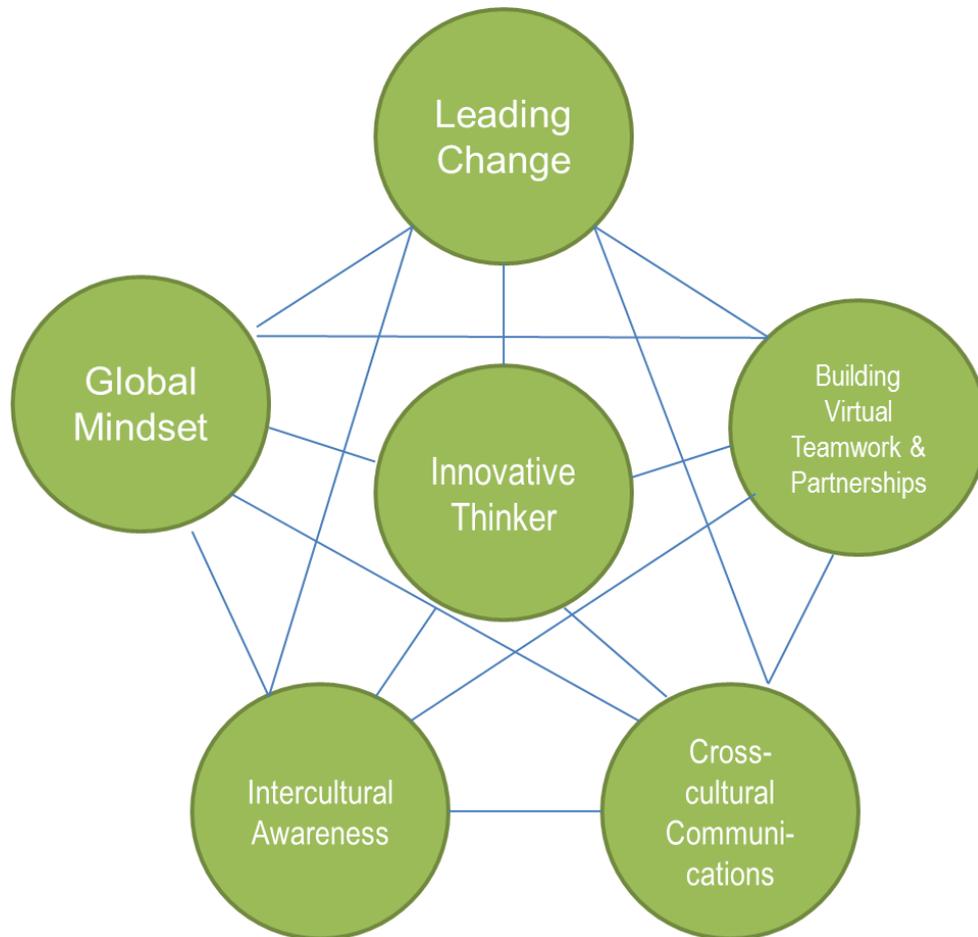
3.1 Ding’s Virtual Global Leadership Model

The Virtual Global leadership model is Dr. Hui Ding’s original construct. In this model, a good leader needs to have the skills of leading change, building virtual teamwork and

Ding

partnerships, thinking globally, excellent cross-cultural communication skills, and intercultural awareness.

Figure 1: Ding's Virtual Global Leadership Model



The most important one which is central in the model is the innovative thinker.

- Innovative thinker: Organizational dynamics change. Leaders must adapt to new technologies, new theories, and new business environments. Therefore, leaders should be innovative thinkers and promote innovation in their organizations.
- Intercultural awareness: Leaders must remain aware of cultural differences. The leader must understand a host country's politics, logistics options, and social situations.
- Cross-cultural communication skills: Global leaders must have cross-cultural communication skills if they are to succeed in today's global environment.
- Global mindset: Global mindset means that leaders make decisions that work locally and globally, and discover how their company can compete better in the global marketplace.
- Building Virtual teamwork and Partnerships: Leaders must have collaboration skills and build effective relationship with the employees.

Ding

- Leading change: Leaders must have the ability to lead any change of business strategy and organization structure.

3.2 Methodology

The Qualitative method used for this research is Phenomenology and is used for creating Ding's Virtual Global Leadership Model.

Phenomenological method is based on personal knowledge and expertise, and focuses on personal perspective and understanding. Phenomenology assumes that the experience of any reality is possible only through interpretation according to Prasad (2005). Interviews were conducted for examining virtual global leadership. Several leaders in high –tech companies and universities participated in the survey.

Several questions were asked of several leaders who worked in university and high-tech organizations.

Survey questions: each participant was asked to answer at least four questions as follows:

1. Please describe your leadership experience with virtual teams?
2. What electronic communication is most and least effective based on your experience as a leader?
3. Please describe yourself and your leadership style.
4. What do you think about global mindset?
5. Please describe a successful story in your work place as a leader?
6. Please describe your thoughts about cross-cultural communication skills.
7. What do you think about cultural awareness?
8. Please describe a time in your job where you provided successful leadership.

The following leaders interviewed worked in government and higher education. Given the type of career technology, cross-cultural communication, and the global aspect of the Virtual Global leadership model, analysis of their career experiences were performed. They were asked five questions designed to explore the presence of the components of the Virtual Global leadership model and how they were used in their careers leading the organization. Also how the leadership style connected with building relationships with employees was explored in the question design. Evidence of the impact of cultural competency to the effectiveness of the leadership style used was also analyzed.

Leader one was a project manager and team leader as Database Administrator in the Colorado Governor's Office of IT (OIT), who was selected as a project manager combining management and technology.

There was a big change in OIT; he was the one leading change.

Leader two: is an associate professor who teaches English classes courses

Leader three: is a professor who teaches online courses and a researcher. She was chosen since technology was used primarily in delivery of instruction over a four year

Ding

period and she had published journal articles globally requiring communication with conference coordinators and publishing companies months prior to arriving in the respective country to present to global audiences.

4. The Findings

The findings reveal that Ding's Virtual Global leadership is very useful for the multinational company. The following themes that emerge from the interviews include trust, virtual team coordination, inclusion, and access.

A Multinational company is defined as one in which the company's headquarters are in the USA and offices worldwide. Employees talked with each other using high tech technologies, such as video conferences, Skype, etc.

It was also observed in the case of the Project Manager, William that correcting an employee's error and dealing with the employee punitively was not considered in the team environment using technology. He also shared the necessity of the leader to give equal access to employees in the resources that they work with in their jobs. Stress was transferred to team performance as well.

Jennie, the English professor, did not appear to leverage technology in her leadership in the classroom which presents an opportunity for team building among students without face to face confrontation that is disruptive of the entire class. Accommodating various cultures in curriculum planning speaks to the value of inclusion in building teams and student to professor relationships while modeling the same for students.

Wanda, the online instructor and researcher, demonstrated an ability to offer instruction with a mentoring component to a broader audience in a virtual environment that would otherwise present challenges in meeting needs who are geographically dispersed or have disabilities that create barriers to learning in a traditional classroom. The other thought is sessions archive recorded can be accessed at a time convenient for the student contributing to improved relationships. Also, the knowledge gained in visiting other countries as a researcher and using intercultural communication has contributed to her comfort level and building relationships with audiences that are diverse and global.

The findings reveal that Ding's Virtual Global Leadership Model is a wonderful model for developing global leadership in virtual international business environments. Through developing technology, virtual offices are becoming a trend, and virtual teamwork and communications are becoming more and more popular. Global leaders need to have the ability to create a culture that includes trust and facilitates virtual team coordination, and excellent communication skills. This model creates a whole system model for leaders to understand systems as a whole and not in parts like pieces of a puzzle, with interdependence and a systems thinking approach to Virtual Global Leadership of organizations.

5. Summary and Conclusions

Ding (2013) has constructed such a whole system model for leaders to understand systems as a whole and not in parts like pieces of a puzzle, with interdependency and a systems thinking approach to Virtual Global Leadership of organizations. The innovative

Ding

thinker as the leader is at the center which poses a new way of looking at the leadership traits necessary to drive such a system effectively. Looking at systems innovatively from a whole systems approach incorporates intercultural differences in communication and political systems that would embrace how business is done in China during the work day and after hours suited to a virtual environment. Examples of nuances that should be addressed is the prevailing wisdom the Chinese, concerned as they are with issues of face, prefer indirect communication (Ting-Toomey; Beamer; Gudykunst; Macleod; Stewart and Kaplan; Ma and Chuang) as cited by Beamer (2013). The collectivist culture of the Chinese prefers harmony in interactions with others and this transfer to business. The avoidance of confrontation and challenge is performed to nurture relationships in a roundabout discursive style. Thus, the indirectness in Chinese communication will need to be adapted in a virtual context, both in the text's organizational pattern and in internal linguistic features and modalities as it had been done in face to face interactions (p.201).The innovative leader at the center of the Ding global virtual leadership model (2013) will have the skills to accomplish this task, yet preserve the harmony in nurturing relationships.

Edward T. Hall as cited by Beamer (2003), correlated indirectness with high-context cultures. Nurturing relationships involves native Chinese sharing a large number of experiences, values, attitudes, and behaviors that allow them to communicate implicitly and indirectly. This is in contrast to the western mannerisms of explicitness and directness of communication symbolic of low-context cultures (p.201).

The post-managerial society that flat organizations evoke is what this model suggests, and elevates leadership to the level of building relationships and trust with followers essential to organizational effectiveness and the new global mindset reflected in the Ding model. This leadership would require more of a team focus and a culture of synergy, revealing the importance of research that validates culture and achieves reliable research outcomes. Such research that precludes the Ding model had been one school of thought cited by Yim-Yu, Everett, Nicholson, and Joel Don (2008), on culture and innovation by Fukuyama (1992) who argued that the collapse of authoritarian governments preceded a positive movement to liberal governments, leading to a global culture that is constructed upon "technologically driven economic growth and the capitalist social relations necessary to produce and sustain it". Fukuyama also views "capitalism and democracy have won and that there are no forces on the horizon that can generate interesting events" ([52] Nisbett, 2003, p. 219), as cited by Yim-Yu, Everett, Nicholson, and Joel Don (2008). This is evidence of the influence on policy and is aligned with the collectivist cultural practice of cultivating harmonious relationships that transfers to business practices driven by government policy.

Ding's Virtual Global Leadership model is very useful for multinational companies. The global environments which business faces are very complicated. This point of view is supported by the Divergence theory school of thought which holds that uniqueness in each culture deeply affects individuals that elevates interactional differences among managers of different national or ethnic backgrounds cited by Yim-Yu, Everett, Nicholson, and Joel Don (2008).There are huge needs by those companies with leaders described by divergence theory, since they require global leaders to lead diverse employees and understand different countries' laws and operations.

Through technology developing, virtual offices are becoming a trend, and virtual teamwork and communications are becoming more and more popular. Virtual

Ding

globalization will become a trend as well. The Virtual Global Leadership Model is a wonderful model for developing global leadership in virtual international business environments. This Ding Model also supports Crossvergence theory, a recent development in nascent literature. The theory proposes that the interdependence and integration of societies and economies allows the growth of a new, unique value system that is different from any of the previously established cultures ([60] Ralston et al., 1997) as cited by Yim-Yu, Everett, Nicholson, and Joel Don (p.697). All of the factors need leaders to have innovative thinking and the ability to adapt new technologies, new cultures. Depending on the empirical evidence that drives the approach, will determine the rigor required and for this reason the organization would benefit to assess which theoretical approach is the best fit.

Since virtual global leadership is a complicated subject to study. More research is needed on this subject. For example, doing some quantitative research on Ding's Virtual Global Leadership will be Dr. Ding's next step. "

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Appendix A Leader Interviews

Leader: Dr. Wanda Cousar - Professor

Question 1: Describe your leadership experience with virtual teams.

I have managed students at the graduate level on virtual teams in a Managerial Economics course. The team I recall that required the most attention had three females and a male. Two of the females were not responding to deadlines and request for their section of the paper due by email. This frustrated the other two team members and they decided to submit the paper with their names on it without effort in communicating by any other means with the other teammates. When I called the other two females, one had lost her textbook and notebook with the contact information of her team members while at a recital with her daughter; she was a single parent and recently divorced. I gave her the contact information of her team members and when she called, it ended up in an argument with the use of profanity and accusing the male who was team lead of being totally inconsiderate. The other female had lost her father and had returned home for the funeral in a remote area of Louisiana where she could not access internet and her culture forbid making any contact during the grieving period. I asked her if she had considered informing her team before leaving for Louisiana of the situation since maybe she could have arranged to do more of a future paper after the funeral services and paying respects to her father. She had not. Ultimately, I learned that the male was in a job where he never dealt with emotional employees because he worked with all males in a military civilian job. I immediately began to coach him in how to bring the team back together and suggested that he discuss with the team to start if apologies were in order and then complete the template of the charter to establish expectations provided in the syllabus. Everyone apologized including him. The team left the storming phase, proceeded to the norming phase, and then the performing phase. The male leader thanked me for coaching him because he had succeeded bringing the team back together and they achieved "A's" on projects due to increased cultural communication and building relationships, and setting expectations. So this was also a lesson learned.

Question 2: What electronic communication is most and least effective based on your experience as a leader?

I have found email the least effective since it gets overused. When communicating to different time zones like to India from Colorado there is an 11 ½ hour difference. Therefore responses are delayed for nearly ½ a day and sometimes emails are not received causing confusion in communicating deadlines and resulting in perceptions that an author (s) may be slacking in their responsibility to meet publication deadlines. I have found Skype to be the most effective and using conference calls to complement emails for establishing mutual understanding if there are cultural nuances misunderstood over email, because participants can ask for clarification. In one conference call I had with a conference coordinator from India that I was working on a case study paper for, he explained Appreciative Inquiry methodology and the analysis of themes using the term "enabling" differently that I understood it. He met facilitating and I thought he met making one more dependent. We were able to clarify the meaning during the phone conference with all of the coauthors on the paper who were on the call.

Ding

Question 3: Please describe yourself and your leadership style.

As a leader who is a descendent to forced and volunteer immigrants was parented by an American citizen and a Naturalized citizen, I value and understand the influence that culture, norms, religion, and gender have on motivating employees. I am best described as a situational leader, a model developed by Blanchard and Hersey (1979). Situational leadership is dependent on subordinate maturity which dictates the style of leadership used to induce compliance or influence behavior. This style of leadership is based on the premise that there is no one “best” way to go about influencing people (1979).

Question 4: What do you think about global mindset?

I think a global mindset is absolutely required to sustain a leader who is leading an organization in a global economy. When achieving a balance of environmental, economic, and social objectives in strategic planning profit is inevitable.

Question 5: Please describe a successful story in your working place as a leader?

As a situational leader I have used my expert power in presentations that mentor diverse students. The areas include Arts & Entertainment, Mentoring, and Leadership Coaching. My story is that these virtual communities have grown to include students from various cultural backgrounds who are learning to overcome self-imposed barriers with education and positive thinking by leveraging discovered talents as strengths. The Student Mentoring Community and Arts & Entertainment Communities online consist of participants who have disabilities or are from ethnic groups where the majority culture and language is not their first language but through topics I present in giving them knowledge, have become high academic achievers and motivated to mentor others with similar profiles.

Question 6: Please describe your thoughts about cross-cultural communication skills.

Cross-cultural communication skills is essential to economic development and in a global economy here in the 21st century. Learning cultural norms and appreciating how other do business and demonstrate hospitality ensures that no one is offended and creates harmony. Learning to write and speak to a global audience is also crucial to succeeding in cross cultural communication. I would recommend that everyone learn to speak and write in two or more languages and visit those countries to learn the culture to facilitate cross-cultural communications. Throughout my life I have been to the Bahamas, Jamaica, and India. I would like to visit other countries in Africa, Asia, and Europe to enhance my career.

Leader: Jennie Antes – Associate professor

Interviewer: Could you please answer the following questions?

Question 1: Please describe yourself and your leadership style.

As an English instructor, I am not familiar with business terms associated with leadership, but I can describe my own leadership style in the classroom. My job is to be expert in the material I teach, to develop interesting and effective classroom activities

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that allow students to explore and present their findings, and to create a classroom atmosphere in which students safely interact. I allow noise and enthusiasm, but channel it back to the day's objective. Students think my classes are "fun," but they also think my classes are hard.

Question 2: What do you think about cultural awareness?

I believe cultural awareness is one of the most important skills (?) talents (?) of any successful leader. In my case, it means being sensitive (inclusive) in designing lessons. It also means being able to control the classroom environment so that no student feels lesser, or that I don't understand why something might be upsetting. I also have to channel student comments, or lead a student to better explain a comment if it may be hurtful or misinterpreted by another student. Some of my students have had little interaction with other cultures and they can accidentally create a rift in the classroom.

Question 3: Please describe a successful story in your working place as a leader.

My more challenging classes are ones in which a student with poor social skills or lack of impulse control irritates fellow students. In these situations, I must work to create a team atmosphere, or one in which students meld as a kind of family. I have found that my own reactions to the student temper the growing irritation, as students tend to follow my lead. One class had such a challenge. Two students clashed, one who acted impulsively and one who reacted with irritation. In this situation, I lead more than usual, keeping the students busy with individual activities. As I treated each student with equal fairness and attention, a family culture developed. The irritated student was absorbed into the family culture and became able to relax with the impulsive student.

Question 4: Please describe your thoughts about the importance of leadership in regard to change.

One's immediate leaders make the most difference when it comes to accepting change. Even those peers whom one regards as leaders are more important than the upper administrators in creating an atmosphere of acceptance. When one hears complaints and unhappiness from those closest in the work place, it begins to infect one's own thinking, no matter how positive one may be at first. The best way to affect a change is to isolate from the rest of the crew those who bring their own disaffection.

Leader: William Rao - Senior DBA and Project Manager

Question 1: Do you have leadership experience with virtual teams?

Yes, I have leadership experience with virtual teams. I was a team leader on a database administrator team. Our team members, our customers and our databases were all in different locations. I used different leadership ways than traditional ways to manage the team members and complete the tasks.

Question 2: What electronic communication is most and least effective based on your experience as a leader?

Based on my experience as a leader, instant message is most effective because

Ding

- (1) People can form all different kind of chatting groups easily and quickly. The group can be as small as 2 people and can be as big as 50 plus people. Any person can be in multiple groups as needed.
- (2) All communications are instant.
- (3) People can share computer screen, pictures, and transfer files in instant message.
- (4) You can keep all instant messages in your computer and you can search easily at any time.

Email is least effective because when something is not clear, it's hard to get immediate response and hard to explain.

Question 3: Please describe a time in your job where you provided successful leadership.

William's answer: Story: Informix High-Availability & Upgrade project. February 2012. William's role: lead database administrator. After he led this project successfully, he was promoted to team leader.

1) Action:

- In February, 2012, I led the Colorado Department of Corrections Informix High-Availability and Upgrade project as the project manager of this big project. I had two other Informix DBAs, two system administrators, several programmers and some key users in my team.
- We prepared for the High-Availability and Upgrade carefully. I designed a high level plan and a low level plan. I also planned for the worst scenarios.
- We implemented High-Availability and Upgrade at the same time.
- All team members had been working with me for several years and they trusted me. They all worked well under my leadership. Everybody followed my plan in each step.

2) Result

- This project was very successful. I was promoted to be State of Colorado Informix DBA team leader, supporting three state agencies which use Informix databases.
- Most database queries got response in 1 or 2 seconds.
- Now we have three high availability database servers, Primary, HDR and RSS.
- I used a new feature and purposely set the RSS server with 8 hours delay. In another word, the RSS server is 8 hours behind the primary server. This is really useful because not long after we finished this project, a programmer accidentally updated thousands of records. I quickly retrieved the data from the RSS server and put them back into the Primary server. Problem solved! Way easier than before.

Question 4: Please describe your thoughts about global mindset

William's answer: Technology is global not local. We need to stay on the top above the all competitors. Globalization, we can set up office in India and then we can cover 24/7 without night shift in United States.

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Question 5: Please describe your thoughts about cross-cultural communications.

We need to spend more time and put more effort to communicate with different people from different culture. Providing more standardized document makes sure everybody follow the same standard.