

Digitalizing Knowledge Work: Processes, Enablers and Effects

Nelda Vendramin, PhD project

Background

The advancing technologies contribute to making work and daily life increasingly digital. Organizations integrate digital solutions e.g., online platforms, telecommunication applications, cloud services, analytic tools and artificial intelligence into workplaces. Digital technology enables novel forms of virtual and dispersed work where both time, geography, organizational boundaries and culture create distance to coworkers and colleagues. This shift allows knowledge-intensive organizations in highly competitive industries such as high-tech, banking, insurance and legal, to transition from co-located to dispersed and virtual work. This PhD project aims to understand the drivers and enablers of virtual work in knowledge-intensive organizations and gain insight into how organizations undergoing digitalization design and organize work, and what managerial practices, approaches and tools managers in knowledge-intensive organizations use to lead from a distance.

Research questions

- What are the external and internal drivers, key enablers and challenges of virtual work in knowledge-intensive organizations?
- How is virtual work designed and organized in knowledge-intensive organizations?
- How do knowledge-intensive organizations manage and lead virtual teams?

Method

This PhD project takes an exploratory and descriptive qualitative methods approach. In this project, I apply a longitudinal multiple case study to evaluate the complex transition and adaption to virtual working over 18 months. The methodology is divided into three main areas: 1) literature review, 2) case studies including semi-structured interviews, workshops and focus groups, document and field-note studies, 3) cross-case analysis where I apply thematic coding across cases.

Expected results

This PhD project contributes to both research and management practice. The PhD project adds to the body of knowledge in digitalization of knowledge work, specifically on the organization of virtual work, and management and leadership practices of virtual working. Furthermore, this project expects to contribute with the development of a process model on the design of virtual work that is complemented by identifying internal and external drivers, key enablers, challenges, approaches and tools.



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