“Why can’t we work together anymore?”: can intercultural, cross-functional, remote teams collaborate?

You have been hired as a consultant by Reynolds Walker Walton (R2W), a growing supply chain software company based in Northwest Arkansas with locations in Bangalore, India, and Suzhou, China. R2W has had success with culturally and linguistically diverse, virtual, and highly talented teams (usually of about 8-10 employees) who handle challenging, time-sensitive projects, but those teams are now not working well together. Their teams all speak the same language (English) yet are cross-functional, which means they consist of team members from different departments: backend and frontend engineers, data scientists, developers, product managers, sales, and marketing staff. The men and women who comprise these teams now struggle to share knowledge willingly, share resources, and even meet deadlines. This quarter alone, R2W has missed one key internal deadline and almost missed a vitally important client deadline!

How can R2W retain its diverse team composition, maintain a high level of technical expertise, and have a multi-continent virtual work environment without continually running into the same problems? R2W teams must remain cross-functional and geographically dispersed/culturally diverse – i.e. do not suggest that US employees only work with US employees or engineers work with fellow engineers. Senior management needs to learn what the current research is on teamwork and team formation, negotiating cultural differences and diverse viewpoints with teams, and virtual teamwork as well as learn how other companies and organizations have dealt with this challenge. Your job is to conduct this research and provide two recommendations to R2W senior management.

Your task: Compose a 2-page, single-spaced business brief answering what two recommendations you have for R2W to improve its practices. Be mindful of your tone, as the goal is to recommend, not dictate action.

Note: you will need to cite 4 different sources in APA on your references page. Your references page won’t count towards the 2-page requirement. When citing sources, use parenthetical citations (see Publication Manual of the APA §6.11-21), not footnotes. The readings cited below are all in APA format, but remove the hyperlinks when you cite.

Readings on team formation, team dynamics, and collaboration:


Please note that we have additional readings on our FBC website, which can be accessed by clicking here.

Organizations with noteworthy collaboration initiatives, policies, or studies:

Marriott  Google (Project Aristotle)  IBM
Credit Suisse  Walt Disney Parks & Resorts  Ford Motor Company (One Ford Plan)

Other companies known for their previous and current successes with teamwork include: Apple, General Electric, HP, P&G, Walmart, and Xerox.

Students must submit the business brief as either a .doc or .docx file type. Other file types cannot be graded and will receive an automatic “0” grade for the assignment. No late work will be accepted.