E-leader trust contributes to satisfaction in virtual teams

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Abstract

Title: E-leader trust contributes to satisfaction in virtual teams

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Aim: Gain insight into how a relationship occur between trust in a virtual team’s e-leader and the satisfaction of the individual virtual team members.

Method: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten virtual team members and one e-leader. By the means of grounded theory data from the interviews were analysed. Findings and results are further presented and discussed as distinct themes found in the empirical data.

Result & Conclusions: We searched for a relationship between trust in the e-leader and the individual virtual team members’ satisfaction. Our findings show that the individual team members’ trust in the e-leader is influencing the feeling of satisfaction in their working environment. The three cues identified to build trust which in turn yields satisfaction in an organisational setting, first relationship and communication, second team spirit, third individual focus.

Suggestions for future research: We suggest a longitudinal approach for further research to understand the long term effects and benefits for the organisation from the relationship between trust and satisfaction. We also believe the result can benefit from studies conducted in other businesses where the competitive landscape and, or setup may differ.

Contribution of the thesis: The thesis contributes to an understanding of what trust in the e-leader contributes to in a virtual team in regards to its individual team members and their satisfaction.

Key words: virtual team, e-leader, trust, satisfaction, international, organisations.
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1. Introduction

The introduction of our paper provide a brief historical overview of the rise and development of virtual teams in organisations. Presented along with a summary of current research and a problem discussion eventuating into our research questions and purpose of the study.

1.1. Background

Starting in the mid 90s and continuing into the 21st century Lilian (2013) state that a paradigm shift has taken place in organisations around the globe. Human interactions have been replaced with communication mediated by information technology according to Avolio and Kahai (2003). Further, Avolio and Kahai (2003) state that numerous leaders depend solely on information technology as their means of communication with their team members. They use the term e-leadership and focus on exploring issues related with leading virtual teams such as shifting from a traditional team to a virtual team may not be a recipe for success. Moreover Kimle (2010) relate these issues leading virtual teams with trust meaning identity pose a more serious impediment to the effectiveness of virtual teams. Breuer, Hüffmeier and Hertel (2016) believe team trust can help organisation and relationship building in teams, and results positive in relation to team effectiveness. Furthermore, team virtuality have a greater need for maintenance of team trust. Therefore, it may also have a greater impact on virtual teams and the virtual setup.

Townsend, DeMarie, and Hendrickson (1998) claim this new way of working, the virtual setup, unbound by time, geography and organisational structures enables a whole new dimension of flexibility and collaboration. Organisations are becoming increasingly international with internal units, customers, suppliers and stakeholders spread, not only across one office building, but dispersed in different countries and regions according to Zaccaro and Bader (2003). A setup enabled by the extensive use of ITC (Information Technology Communication). Phones, web meetings and email are the means of exchanging information in these organisations.

Even if virtual teams have existed for over a decade, the imposing growth has generated a larger interest in how to lead virtual teams successfully as Ford et al. (2016) claim, it is obvious that virtual teams are here to stay.
Job satisfaction however according to Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) is a coordination of emotions that members have towards the tasks they are performing at the workplace and is the essential component for team members’ motivation and encouragement towards enhanced performance. If members are not satisfied, they are not confident about factors such as their rights nor their working conditions. It also leads to co-workers not being cooperative and supervisors not giving them respect. The result of an unsatisfied member is that they feel separate from the organisation.

1.2. Problem discussion

Both trust and satisfaction have been identified as key contributors to performance and effectiveness in virtual teams by Tseng and Ku (2011) and Cicei (2012). Therefore this study aims to fill the gap identified in previous studies. We will study whether trust in the teams’ e-leader also leads to satisfaction of the individual virtual team members in business organisations. This study will give a deeper understanding what leads to satisfaction of an individual team member, and the importance of building trust as an e-leader.

When virtually cooperating, members’ satisfaction may be qualified by the level of virtuality according to Cicei (2012) and the effects of the members’ communication method is often influenced by the type of the structure of the team. Working collaboratively in a satisfied virtual team can represent an important factor for increasing the efficiency of the virtual team.

Organisations according to Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) cannot afford dissatisfied members. Dissatisfied members will not perform up to the standards nor the expectations of their leader and might get fired, resulting in firms suffering additional costs for recruiting new team members. With increasing competition and information technology as an enabler Bergiel, Bergiel and Balsmeier (2008) argue virtual teams were never really planned methodologically rather it evolved when the necessary means became available.

In this virtual way of conducting business Azimi (2015) identified the companies, Sun Microsystems, Dell and Microsoft to be some of the few organisations who had asked the question; how they can lead their virtual teams in the most successful way. Because of the innovation of virtual teams, Ebrahim, Ahmed and Taha (2009) claim, many research areas have yet to be discovered before we fully understand the implications of virtual teams and e-leadership.
It has become even more essential for the e-leader to identify and train the team members in the skills to do it successfully. Organisational strategies for e-leaders to build and maintain trust, which is the key to virtual teams’ success, will only develop to something more critical as today’s technological skills increase the use of international teams according to Ford et al. (2016).

If the bottom line is to develop cues to virtual team members that the organisation, team members, and the team’s leader are all trustworthy, then attending to all the cues that reinforce this perception is critical to virtual team success. Indeed, trust is the glue that holds virtual teams together. (Ford et al., 2016, p. 10).

The importance of trust as the glue holding virtual teams together is stressed by Clemmensen, Khryashcheva and Podshibikhina (2008). Clemmensen et al. (2008) further conclude trust is of importance for the success of virtual teams.

In addition to earlier statements, the work by Avolio and Kahai (2003) states that our understanding of how the virtual team setup impacts the dynamics in organisations is limited. This is further explored, by Snellman (2014) who identifies both challenges and opportunities facing e-leaders. Regardless of perception of e-leadership in a virtual team setup as an opportunity and, or a challenge the researchers tend to agree on the fact that it is different to lead through information technology than through traditional face-to-face communication (Snellman, 2014; Bergiel et al., 2008; Powell et al., 2004).

Zander, Zettinig, and Mäkelä (2013) discuss virtual teams in an international perspective and find additional challenges imposed as cultural differences and diversity increase in international teams. “This cultural and linguistic diversity can be a wonderful source of creativity, but has to be harnessed for that. Otherwise, and perhaps more commonly, it becomes a major source of friction.” (Zander et al. 2013, p. 231).

Both Powel et al. (2004) and Snellman (2014) conducted extensive literature reviews on the subject of e-leaders and virtual teams and their implications on leadership practices to achieve successful virtual teams. While management researchers know the full body of managing physically present teams, there is significantly less understanding of how to lead a virtual team. Not only successfully, but also how to lead virtual teams ensuring they provide the basic organisational support for the team members according to Ford, Piccolo and Ford (2016). The leaders need to ensure they build sustainable trustworthy relationships according to Ford et al. (2016).
Job satisfaction according to Aziri (2011) represents one of the most difficult areas facing today’s leaders when it comes to leading their teams. Aziri (2011) establish that many studies have concluded a large impact of job satisfaction on the motivation of workers. The level of motivation has an impact on productivity and also on performance of business organisations.

Trust in the e-leader is built initially on task-oriented communication according to Rico, Alcover, Sanchez-Manzanares and Gil (2009), whereas socially oriented communication contribute to trust later on when the team has matured. Consequently in a recent study involving student virtual teams, satisfaction was examined with regard to trust. Tseng and Ku (2011) find a positive relationship between increased trust in the leader and team members’ satisfaction. Results show 69 % of the variability in virtual team’s satisfaction can be accounted for by trust.

According to Ford et al. (2016) trust leads to effectiveness. Cicei (2012) finds that trust and satisfaction are related with performance and effectiveness. An opinion shared by Tseng and Ku (2011). Thus studies both in educational and professional settings show a relationship between trust and satisfaction with both performance and effectiveness (Ford et al., 2016; Tseng & Ku, 2011; Cicei, 2012). According to Collins, Chou, and Warner (2014) relationship between individual attitudes and feelings of satisfaction in a virtual working environment has rarely been investigated.

As conclusion, there is no evidence in previous research on whether trust in the teams’ e-leader also leads to satisfaction of the individual virtual team members in business organisations. “Satisfaction has been almost exclusively examined with student virtual teams” (Powell et al., 2004, p. 13). Schiller, Mennecke, Nah and Luse (2014) moreover suggest further research to be conducted in a business organisational setting. Existing research by Romeike, Nienaber and Schewe (2016) has identified a number of causes that may improve a virtual team member’s degree of job satisfaction to a degree similar to employees in traditional teams. Romeike et al. (2016) agree that still largely missing in the literature is empirical work that noticeably related a virtual team member’s degree of trust with the degree of job satisfaction experienced by that team member. This study will fill the incurred gap identified from these studies.
1.3. Research questions

RQ1: In business organisation, how does an e-leader build trust that contributes to satisfaction in a virtual team?

RQ2: How does trust in the e-leader contribute to perceived satisfaction of a virtual team member?

RQ3: What are the benefits of a virtual team in which the members feel trust and satisfaction?

1.4. Purpose

This study aims to gain insight into how a relationship exists between trust in a virtual teams’ e-leader and the team members’ satisfaction in a business organisation.

1.5. Delimitations

We are interested in a possible relationship; therefore we do not seek to quantify the level of satisfaction per se, nor the level of efficiency or performance related to it. Neither will psychological components of trust and satisfaction be examined.
2. Theoretical framework

To fully understand and gain a deeper understanding regarding our field of interest we analysed literature on virtual teams, e-leadership, trust and satisfaction. Primarily focused on important factors affecting the team members in the virtual setup and implications for the work of e-leaders in developing and running their virtual teams. In addition we summarise and define important concepts for our study by developing an overall model.

2.1. Virtual teams

As early as in 2002 almost two thirds of U.S. organisations utilised virtual team setups according to Bergiel et al. (2008). Virtual teams may differ between organisations, there are however some joint guidelines of what defines a virtual team according to Krumm, Kanthak, Hartmann and Hertel (2016). The virtual teams consist of at least one member physically absent from the other team members. Further a virtual team is defined by Powell et al. (2004) as a group which has a purpose, is identified as a social structure and the team members have a shared responsibility for the outcome of their work. This definition goes for both a traditional face-to-face team and a virtual team. A virtual team however differs as it has workers organisationally dispersed by time and, or geography. With this definition Powell et al. (2004) exclude short-term work groups and focus on more permanent teams.

The concept of virtual teams is explained by Ford et al. (2016) and Ebrahim et al. (2009) as a modern approach in organisations to overcome geographical limitations. In addition to overcoming geographical boundaries Powel et al. (2004) argue virtual teams are a key building block for organisations to be able to quickly adapt to the ever-changing competitive landscape as well as helping the organisations to meet customer needs. Lilian (2013) highlights another benefit for organisations utilising virtual team setups, as they are not bound by geography they can hire the very best talents no matter their location.

2.1.1. International virtual teams

Interaction “around the coffee machine” (Zander et al., 2013, p. 235) is not an option for international teams. In cyberspace there is no natural gathering point for the teams as they are dispersed in different countries. Therefore Zander et al. (2013) argue the top challenge for an e-leader leading an international virtual team is to create a context shared by its members.
Through this context team members can relate to each other which according to Zander et al. (2013) strengthens mutual understanding and motivation in the team members. Jarvenpaa, Knoll and Leidner (1998) claim coordination of international virtual teams is accomplished through trust and shared communication. In the study by Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) frequent and recurring communication is mentioned as enabler of high trust in international virtual teams in addition to reducing uncertainties. Using technology to reach out and touch others is suggested by Avolio and Kahai, (2003) as they argue ITC enables more and better communication with international virtual team members. Communication appear to be of great importance in virtual teams and a way to overcome challenges related to having team members located internationally.

Further, Zander et al. (2013) argue most of the challenges regarding leading international virtual teams come from multi cultural nature and dispersion. In conformity with Lilian (2013) and Bergiel et al. (2008), Zander et al. (2013) claim these challenges can be turned into great opportunities in international virtual teams as the diversity and different backgrounds of its members tend to nourish creativity and in the end better solutions to problems.

2.2. E-leaders

The term e-leader was coined by Avolio and Kahai (2003). E-leader refers to the way of practising leadership in virtual teams. As summarised in Avolio’s, Walumbwa’s and Weber’s (2009) literature review researchers agree on the fact that the virtual settings affect the traditional roles of leaders in face-to-face situations. E-leaders have to take this in consideration when working with their teams. Avolio et al. (2009) consider the importance of how technology impacts leadership style and follower motivation and performance. How e-leaders work with their teams, converse and motivate the members in the virtual environment may differ according to Wise (2013) and the team member as a result, may react in different ways depending on their role in the team.

He (2008) suggests that due to the lack of physical proximity, e-leaders are obligated to be proactive and collaborative with members and to modify the effort and strategies to build relationships. E-leadership also targets to build and enhance the relationships among organisational members. Use of technology, quantity and quality of communication as well as task complexity are all variables named as influencers of team performance.
Challenges are more likely to occur when disturbances occur in virtual teams according to Avolio et al. (2009). Thus the e-leader have to be able to handle and understand the factors affecting performance and effectiveness in the virtual team in order to be successful.

According to He (2008), e-leadership may still be as inspiring as in traditional context with physical proximity, even if the members are spatial spread. The e-leader makes sure the participants are inspired and encouraged, resulting in the sharing of ideas gathered through an electronic platform.

2.2.1. Opportunities for e-leaders

Increased globalisation and increased competition are two of the factors frequently mentioned as reasons for forming virtual teams (Bergiel et al., 2008; Rico et al., 2009; Azimi, 2015; Powell et al., 2004). These factors go hand in hand with the most prominent opportunities for e-leaders in virtual teams. According to Bergiel et al. (2008) virtual teams enable e-leaders to use the best talent available unbound by geographical constraints and the need for face-to-face interaction. Thus it is possible to strengthen the firm’s competitiveness by always working with the best talent. The lack of boundaries for staffing options comes with another opportunity - diversity. Zachary and Bader (2003) claim the use of the virtual team members’ diversity in combination with previously mentioned benefits enables the e-leader to achieve a team that is superior to traditional face-to-face teams in terms of potential productivity. Lilian (2013) agrees on the benefits from making use of the diversity found in virtual teams. Further Bergiel et al. (2008) claim the e-leader can as well benefit from lower overall costs, increased flexibility and resource allocation in their virtual teams.

2.2.2. Challenges for e-leaders

With the opportunities of virtual teams follow challenges. Having a virtual team spread out geographically and handling the diversity calls for an e-leader able to handle these situations in order to lead the virtual team successfully according to Lilian (2013). Trust is mentioned as one of the key challenges for e-leaders by Lilian (2013) as it can pose a critical part in the success of virtual teams. Additional challenges highlighted by Lilian (2013) and Bergiel et al. (2008) are communication, handling distance, time and also the diversities of the team members.
Language is a vital part of communication in virtual teams as stated by Bergiel et al. (2008). Challenges derive from cultural perceptions if the spoken language of the team is not the same as the mother tongue of all of the virtual team members. According to Bergiel et al. (2008) some members might experience it as challenging to express their opinions. Distance might impose challenges such as cultural differences or increased diversity. Even though this is considered an opportunity by Lilian (2013) she stresses the fact that e-leaders have to take the diversity into consideration when working with their teams. Zaccaro and Bader (2003) deem the e-leader has to overcome the challenge of inefficient interaction between the team members otherwise it can lead to time being spent dealing with ineffectiveness.

2.3. Trust

Previous research show teams with great degrees of trust are more focused, proactive and optimistic according to Ford et al. (2016). Even if trust is hard to define, Schoorman, Mayer and Davis (2007) define trust as the willingness of one to be exposed to another party based on the expectations. When trust is built, micromanagement stops according to Sabatier (2014) and the constant double-checking of work stops as well. This, moreover reduces emotional stress in the workplace for a team member and promotes an open and honest communication.

To reach a successful virtual team is a well-recognised challenge according to both Rico et al., (2009) and Kimble (2010). Therefore Ford et al. (2016) highlight, team members not only have to trust their e-leaders, they also have to trust the organisation as whole since the virtual circumstances make it hard or unmanageable for the team to observe each other. The organisation, e-leaders and team members as a result, consequently need to invent ways to be transparent with each other to build and maintain trust. Sabatier, (2014) says it is vital to remember trust is a privilege and not a right.

According to Hakanen and Soudunsaari (2012) trust supports communication, thereby people share information more freely. As a consequence of trust people are willing to share information and ideas more frequently. In a relationship built with trust, Hakanen and Soudunsaari (2012) find cooperative behaviour and knowledge sharing might happen. A lack of trust however, will appear as problems in communication and performance quality. Openness builds trust, which further increases communication, respect, interest in others and genuine listening.
Trust building is essential in virtual teams and is considered by Wise (2013) to be the basis of the development of successful virtual teams. Further, managing a virtual team, with workers capable of contributing from anywhere in the world, trust is often, if not the only link between team members and the leader.

Leaders must trust their team members and the members must trust their leaders and each other. Even though it may sound simple, the cycle of trust is hard to achieve. According to Sabatier (2014), members trusting their e-leader are willing to go an extra mile for them. The result is increased productivity and improved quality of work, because people care more about their jobs.

Sabatier (2014) implies the first step for any leader facing trust issues is self-analysis. The question that needs to be asked is: What do the people trusted do to make them appear trustworthy? Probably they will display competency, the ability, skills and experience to perform in a way that meets the expectations. The trustworthy person ultimately shows a willingness and commitment to deliver the desired results.

2.3.1. Cues for trust

Ford et al. (2016) stress that team members of virtual teams have to trust their leaders, each other and the organisation. Consequently, trust in the e-leader in virtual teams is the key in preventing geographical distance from leading to a critical mental distance. The virtual framework according to Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) reduces any other form of social control such as direct supervision. Other influences identified to contribute to the social control, such as geographical closeness is absent. Trust is described by Rico et al. (2009) as the willingness of a member in virtual teams to be defenceless to the actions of other team members. However, trust on a collective level such as a virtual team is more complicated than that since there are multiple trustees according to Jarvenpaa et al. (1998). Lack of day-to-day interactions make it harder for virtual teams to build trust according to Ford et al. (2016). As well as the nonverbal communication which is lost in most communication through ITC.
Nevertheless, when team members are spread geographically, it is problematic to build a relationship according to Greenberg et al. (2007) as many traditional forms of examining and controlling are not possible. Communication has to be intentionally composed according to Greenberg et al. (2007) and Jarvenpaa et al. (1998). If one or several virtual team members work in different time zones, answers could be delayed and this has to be taken into consideration as well.

Overall organisational cues for trust identified by Ford et al. (2016) are transparency, swift information flow, ability to recognise time and cultural differences, explicit norms for communication. As for the e-leader Ford et al. (2016) identify the following important antecedents of trust: communication abilities, rewarding performance on an individual and group basis, conflict resolution and finding ways to make team members feel included in contrary to feeling isolated. These antecedents of trust build further on the ones concluded by Jarvenpaa et al. (1998) which stated; goal orientation, integrity and power of initiative.

2.4. Satisfaction

Cicei (2012) reports that satisfaction in virtual teams tend to be lower than in face-to-face teams. Gilson et al. (2014) deem satisfaction as something achievable in virtual teams as long as variables such as goals, conflicts and technological capabilities are managed in an adequate way by the e-leader. On the contrary examples of variables contributing to dissatisfaction were low visibility and low access to information according to Gilson et al. (2014).

Satisfaction in a work environment is defined by Tella, Ayeni and Popoola (2007) as a gratifying and positive emotional state of mind as a result from the evaluation of one's job or job experiences. It is a result of team members’ perception of how well their performance delivers those things that are viewed as vital. Feeling satisfied as a team member is an emotional response to a job situation and can only be inferred. It is often determined by how well the outcome meet expectations and represents several related attitudes. Job satisfaction in a team is so vital that its absence often leads to weariness and reduced organisational commitment. A lack of satisfaction in a work environment is a predictor of quitting a job.
From the literature examined we find it of great importance for e-leaders to both maximise variables contributing to overall satisfaction as well as to minimise variables adding up to dissatisfaction. The two most important factors identified by Cicei (2012) as enablers of satisfaction in virtual teams are communication and leadership.

According to Indermun and Bayat (2013) satisfaction in a team is one of the most researched areas of organisational behaviours. It is the most significant factor in understanding the team members’ motivation, effectiveness and performance. Job satisfaction in general has been connected with enhanced job performance and positive work values but also lower rates of non-attendance and burnouts. Tella et al. (2007) implicate that an effective organisation will make sure that there is a nature of support and sense of commitment and satisfaction within the sphere of the e-leader’s guidance. In order to make team members satisfied and committed there is need for solid and effective motivation at the various levels and sections in matter.

Therefore, it is vital according to Indermun and Bayat (2013) that leaders be troubled with the level of satisfaction of their team members. A dissatisfied member may cause undesirable job outcomes and as a result these members may withdraw from the position psychologically and display unsettling behaviours. In conclusion, dissatisfaction in this matter produces a series of withdrawal cognitions.

2.5. Theoretical model

From our findings in the theory we created a theoretical model of a virtual team with our research questions in mind. The model is presented in figure 1. In summary, when the e-leader consciously works with trust building towards the virtual team members and the virtual team member thereof feel trust in the e-leader the relationship we aim to find is between trust and satisfaction. This relationship will lead to additional positive effects which in the end results in virtual team efficiency, leading us back to the e-leaders work towards an effective and thus successful virtual team.
To the far left in *figure 1* is the e-leader. The e-leader utilises trust building to gain trust from the virtual team members. The centre section of *figure 1* is our main focus for the study where we want to gain insight into the relationship between trust and satisfaction, where an increased feeling of trust towards the e-leader results in an increase in perceived satisfaction by the virtual team members. To the far right in *figure 1* are the additional positive effects of satisfaction mentioned by Cicei (2012) and Ford et al. (2016), increased virtual team efficiency and in turn leading us back to the e-leader who’s gain is an increasingly successful virtual team.
3. Method

In this chapter we describe the methodological decisions made for our study. We start by analysing research methods used in previous research in the field of virtual teams and methodological suggestions made for future research in those studies. Essential decisions are outlined for the foundation of the study. From here we chose and present a suitable methodological approach. After identifying and defining our method we state the criticism of our method along with its strengths and weaknesses, as well as present the data sources used in our study.

3.1. Methods used in previous research

In analysing previous research two common and recurring methodological approaches are found in the studies. The first is studies comparing traditional face-to-face teams to virtual teams. The second is studies conducted in educational settings. Recently Bergiel et al. (2008) and Powell et al. (2004) have suggested different approaches to the research regarding virtual teams and e-leadership.

With a long history of traditional face-to-face teams ranging back to the 1960s Townsend et al. (1998) and Ebrahim et al. (2008) claim knowledge regarding the more traditional team setup with face-to-face interaction is more sound than the knowledge about virtual teams. As a consequence Bergiel et al. (2008) find most studies up to date use existing knowledge of traditional teams and try to apply it to the new ways of working in virtual teams through comparison. Thus comparative studies have been the norm in virtual team research according to Bergiel et al. (2008). However these comparative studies have shown contradictory results. Comparing cohesion in virtual teams Warkentin, Sayeed and Hightower (1997) conclude the cohesion is lower in a virtual team, while Chidambaram, (1996) claim the same level of cohesion can be achieved. The same is true for comparative studies regarding satisfaction. Powell et al. (2004) have identified studies concluding there is no difference between satisfaction in traditional and virtual teams. While others argue there is a lower level of satisfaction in virtual teams. These vague results give little guidance for future research or practitioners in the field of virtual teams. Instead Bergiel et al (2008) call for a shift from comparative studies. This opinion is shared with Martins, Gilson and Maynard (2004) who argue this approach broadens the understanding of the attributes of virtual teams.
Nicholas and Ng (2009) claim that the fast-changing technology has enabled virtual teams in educational settings. This statement is in accordance with the statements about virtual teams in organisations by Bergiel et al. (2008). Many educational institutions have joined virtual learning teams in their instructional models according to Topchyan and Zhang (2014). Therefore, students interrelate in a virtual space supported by a course management system such as Blackboard. Olson, Ringhand, Kalinski, and Ziegler (2015) conclude online educations have seen significant growth for the past years internationally and consequently the research around it has increased. Even though the virtuality is the same for both student and business settings results from studies have shown a divergence between results in controlled settings with students compared to field studies in organisations. Thus Bergiel et al. (2008) conclude results from educational settings cannot always be generalised to business settings. Regarding satisfaction Bergiel et al. (2008) find that almost all available research has been conducted in student virtual teams. With respect to their previous statements it makes generalisations and conclusions regarding satisfaction in business settings more kittle.

We have found that previous research focused methodologically on comparative studies and was conducted mostly in educational settings. Resulting in uncertainties regarding implications for future research and practitioners as results have been contradictory. Further differences in results between research in controlled versus field settings have shown divergence. Powell et al. (2004) call for future research in actual working teams. Piccoli et al. (2004) are of the same opinion and claim future research should investigate workers in organisations rather than students. As for comparative studies Martins et al. (2004) argue they limit generalisation of findings, thus there is a need to move away from comparing to examining purely the virtual teams. This, according to Bergiel et al. (2008) enables opportunities to gain a deeper understanding of virtual teams and how to maximise their performance.

3.2. Methodological approach

In this particular study we wanted to gain insight into a relationship between trust in the e-leader and the satisfaction of team members in virtual teams. In search for this relationship we want to study virtual teams and from our semi-structured interviews gain understanding on how trust is related to satisfaction. As for the base of our methodological framework this will be an inductive study. Stated by Thomas (2006) an inductive approach will enable us to make conclusions based on our observations.
Thus, we can further pinpoint themes in the data that is relevant for the purpose of the study and create new theories. In our study the human perspective is of importance for our understanding of the possible relationship between trust and satisfaction as we seek to find the team members perspectives. As individual team members’ perceptions are of great importance for our study we have taken a constructivist approach to social entities. We based the choice of our approach on Bryman and Bell’s (2013) theory stating constructivism is the perception of social constructs as something not certain, but possible to influence by members of the organisation. With these methodological assumptions as our starting point we have a methodological foundation that we believe enable us to get the most out of our study of virtual teams, their members, trust and satisfaction.

3.3. Qualitative research

Our ambition is to create a deeper understanding of ideas and attitudes. The cause of human actions and decision-making, rather than identifying what is decided, done and said and what the optimal decision is. Therefore, we use semi-structured interviews at Dell to collect data for this study. In line with Bryman and Bell (2013) analysing low structured data such as data from semi-structured interviews generates a qualitative research. A qualitative method according to Alvehus (2013) generates relationship, which is what we seek to find in our study.

Rigorous data collection is highlighted by Ranney et al. (2015) as a vital part of a qualitative research. In our qualitative study, the majority of effort in the design stage is being spent developing a systematic method of data collection through well-designed interview questions enabling us to fully interpret and understand the respondents’ answers.

Empirical material is discussed by Yin (2007) who mentions two main tasks for the empirical data. Give thoroughly detailed and useful observations of the reality and to avoid earlier dedications to any theoretical model. Therefore our empirical part of the study will be based entirely on primary data, which is data created solely for our study according to Alvehus (2013). We strongly believe it is the best way for us to gain understanding of our problem. By doing so we avoid the risk of being dependent on interpretations made by other authors which can be a risk with the use of secondary data in empirical findings according to Bryman and Bell (2013).
3.4. Building the theoretical framework

As for the theoretical framework of this study secondary data has been of great importance for us. Secondary data is data collected by other researchers. According to Irwin (2013) secondary data can help to find and understand current research and key concepts in the field of interest. The main source for our secondary data has been peer-reviewed articles published in scientific journals. Peer-reviewed articles are considered reliable sources by Bryman and Bell (2013) because they are controlled and verified by other researchers or third parties with knowledge in the particular field of study before they are published. Further the authenticity was verified according to the procedure suggested by Eriksson and Hultman (2014) where we focused on the researchers’ references in their articles as well as researchers and organisations linking to the article at hand. Thus our use of peer-reviewed articles and our own reviews of its references ensures qualitative secondary data.

Articles were sought for in the databases; Emerald Insight, EBSCOHost, Sage journals, Taylor & Francis Online, ProQuest and Elsevier. Initially the keywords e-leader, e-leadership in conjunction with virtual teams were used. Further we narrowed down to organisations, and limited our searches by trust and satisfaction. As virtual teams often exist across borders we included an international perspective in our searches. For our methodological considerations we used books as a complement to peer-reviewed articles.

The theoretical model was created from our findings in the literature review and structured with our research questions in mind. In the model we focus on the e-leader, the virtual team members and satisfaction. Trust is considered the link between these three as we were interested in finding a relationship between trust and satisfaction.

3.5. Sample

During our initial reviews regarding the topic of virtual teams and e-leadership we came across Dell. It was stated by Azimi (2015) that Dell is one of the most prominent utilises of virtual teams and has an excellent e-leadership. The reason for Dell’s success according to Azimi (2015) has been their commitment to developing a capable organisation and focus on how they can guide their personnel in the virtual world. In an interview by Magretta (1998) with Michel Dell his beliefs in the virtual are obvious.
According to Magretta (1998) this enables Dell as a company to be more competitive and serve their customers in a much better and more efficient manner. “Virtual integration, as Michael Dell envisions it, has the potential to achieve both coordination and focus. If it delivers on that promise, it may well become a new organisational model for the information age.” (Magretta, 1998, para. 3). Judging from the theoretical aspects we have identified regarding virtual teams Michael Dell’s predictions were correct.

In the high tech sector, which Dell is a part of, virtual teams are increasingly common according to Daim et al. (2012). Therefore we found it of great interest for our study to further analyse Dell to gain insight and understanding of how their dedication to virtual teams have led them to effectiveness and success from a perspective of trust and satisfaction. Thus we think our results may benefit other companies in the high-tech sector as they operate in a similar environment as Dell.

The selection of respondents was made through convenience sample in cooperation with one of the e-leaders at Dell. Respondents were selected from his team which has members spread across Scandinavia. According to Bryman and Bell (2013) convenience sampling consists of persons who currently happen to be available for our study. Further Bryman and Bell (2013) mention that problems can arise with this approach as it is harder to generalise the results. At the same time, we consider it acceptable and legitimate to implement this type of selection based on Bryman and Bell’s (2013) theory that this gives us an opportunity to get a head start in the analysis and continued research on e-leader's trust-building role and contributions to satisfaction.

According to Etikan (2016) convenience sample is a type of non-probability or non-random sampling where the members of aimed population meet clear practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, which is true for our study. It allowed us to reach a larger amount of respondents during our rather limited timeframe for completing the study. To increase the quality of the data collected we however listed requests regarding the respondent's experience with working in virtual teams to the manager whose team respondents were chosen from.
Three requests were made; the respondents had to have at least two years of experience from working in a virtual team, the respondents should work in different offices or be field based and finally some should be working in a different country. In addition to interviewing team members we also chose to interview the team’s e-leader. This enables us to verify if the e-leader’s perceptions are aligned with the team members’. A total of eleven interviews were carried out which of ten with virtual team members and one with their e-leader.

3.6. Semi-structured interviews

Our study will be based on semi-structured interviews conducted at Dell. Semi-structured interviews give us more room for expansion of the respondents’ answers to truly understand their views. It also allows a wider variety of answers enabling us to gain deeper knowledge of the virtual team members thoughts. We wanted to delimit as slightly as possible in order to find our respondents' at Dell's true perceptions of the subjects at hand. Bryman and Bell (2013) as well as Alvehus (2013) describe semi-structured interviews as an interview where the interviewer ask a small range of open questions with a wide theme which the conversation will be centred around. This results in a significantly larger opportunity for the respondent to influence the content of the interview. It enabled us to actively generate supplementary questions during the progression of the interview. We also think this kind of survey will give us answers we might not expect to get, but answers that will be useable throughout our research.

The interviews were split into two sets of questions, the first with the virtual team members as respondents and the second with the e-leader as respondent. The questions were then divided based on our study’s two subjects, trust and satisfaction. For each subject we established three open-ended questions based on the challenges regarding trust and satisfaction in virtual teams which we outlined in our theoretical framework. For the virtual team members the questions regarding trust were based on the feeling of trust in the e-leader and for the e-leader based on how to build trust as a e-leader. Moreover three questions were designed with the subject satisfaction in a work environment in mind. For the virtual members these questions were based on the feeling of individual satisfaction in an organisational setting and for the e-leader how he can work to make sure the individual team members feel satisfied. Figure 2 shows the structure of the interview setup. Complete interview guides are supplied in the appendices, appendix A and B.
The questions were drafted to allow the respondent to speak freely around the subject and for us to be able to lead the interview further towards interesting subjects emerging from the respondents answers with follow up questions when needed. *Table 1* gives some examples of individual follow up questions which were used during the interviews based on the respondents answers to our main questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow up question</th>
<th>Emphasising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If confidence in your e-leader is important for you, what would you say increase your confidence?</td>
<td>Trust, about feeling trust in the e-leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You want the e-leader to be open and transparent, can you give examples of situations where this is important?</td>
<td>Trust, about feeling trust in the e-leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you able to perform better at work because of your trust in your e-leader?</td>
<td>Trust, about effects of trust on daily work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You mentioned clear directives from the e-leader as important for your satisfaction, can</td>
<td>Satisfaction, what makes you satisfied with your work situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Examples of follow up questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow up question</th>
<th>Emphasising</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>you elaborate what you mean with clear directives?</td>
<td>Satisfaction, what the e-leader can do to increase satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please explain more about what you mean with long-term visions and how they affect your satisfaction?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you please give examples of what you refer to as the points of touch between trust and satisfaction?</td>
<td>Satisfaction, effects of trust in e-leader on work satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews ranged from 31 to 58 minutes as shown in table 2. Based on the opinions of Ranney et al. (2015) there is no exact regulatory framework for a semi-structured interview. The length and particular content of an interview guide differs depending on the type of study, the goals of the study and the total of time available for the interview session. With a final time frame of actual interviews performed, with a mean of 41 minutes and median of 40 minutes we believe we were able to capture a satisfying amount of quality data for our study. At the same time we avoid performing too time consuming interviews as Ranney et al. (2015) implies to lengthy interviews can become stressful for the participants and could affect the overall data quality.

The interviews were conducted at Dell’s Stockholm office. We were able to borrow a small conference room where the interviews could be held without distractions. Bolderston (2012) stress the importance of making the respondent feel comfortable during the interview. We think an environment well known will enable the respondent to be more relaxed and feel more secure during the interview, allowing for more freely formulated answers. Remote and international workers were interviewed when they had scheduled visits to the Stockholm office, enabling us to perform the interviews in person instead of via phone. This adds to the quality of our data as we can interact with the respondents better than via phone. For qualitative studies it is of great importance to perform interviews in person, according to Bryman and Bell (2013). It enables the researcher to react on facial expressions and body language in addition to what the respondent says, which will have a positive impact on our interpretations of the empirical data.
Ten of the interviews were performed by the both of us. One interview was performed alone due to limited availability of the respondent. By undertaking the interviews together, we believe we were able to better catch the true opinions of the respondent as one of us was able to focus on the questions and the other on expressions and body language of the respondent. Bryman and Bell (2013) discuss how the passive interviewer can observe and help ask complementary questions or steer the interview. We find this particularly important as we have limited experience from semi-structured interviews and might miss out on important cues or follow-up questions if we were performing the interviews alone.

To ensure the quality of our interview guide and our questions we performed a pilot study at a tech company similar to Dell. During the pilot study we evaluated if the questions were clear and understandable for the respondent and made minor clarifications in our interview guide after the pilot study to improve the quality of the upcoming interviews at Dell. As Bolderston (2012) highlights, pilot studies are an opportunity to practice using our questions, which from our point of view was the main reason we chose to do the pilot study. The practice enabled us to appear more confident during our interviews at Dell.

3.6.1. Respondents’ profiles

Anonymous A - J were interviewed in their roles as virtual team members while Anonymous K was interviewed in his role as an e-leader. The respondents’ profiles are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview A</td>
<td>2016-Nov-25</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anonymous A, is a sales manager with over twelve years of experience within the company and responsible for the largest accounts with a total business of over 1.8 billion SEK annually. He is located at the Stockholm office and has e-leaders located both in Stockholm and in France.

Interview B | 2016-Nov-29 | 36
Interview C  | 2016-Nov-29 | 40

Anonymous B and C, are account managers based in the office located in Malmö, Sweden. They have four respective five years of experience from working in a virtual team and rely only on remote managers located at the Stockholm office.
Anonymous D, E and F, are account managers based at the Stockholm office. They do however travel large parts of their working time and their day-to-day operations are managed virtually by an e-leader. Their individual experience of working in a virtual team ranges from two to five years.

Anonymous G, H, I and J, are all based at the company’s Copenhagen location and are a part of the virtual team led from the Stockholm office. Their responsibility is account management. They have long experience from working in a virtual team with employment times between four and six years.

Anonymous K, is a Sales Director and e-leader with responsibility for a virtual team consisting of over 60 employees spread across urban areas of Scandinavia. He is located in Stockholm. His team works with major business-to-business and government accounts selling IT hardware and solutions. He has worked his way up through the organisation to where he is today and seen the transformation from local face-to-face teams to virtual teams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview D</td>
<td>2016-Dec-01</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview E</td>
<td>2016-Nov-29</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview F</td>
<td>2016-Dec-02</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview G</td>
<td>2016-Nov-30</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview H</td>
<td>2016-Nov-30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview I</td>
<td>2016-Nov-30</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview J</td>
<td>2016-Nov-30</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview K</td>
<td>2016-Nov-11</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Respondents’ profiles and interview times

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean:</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median:</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.7. Analysis

We chose an inductive approach for our study, thus we decided to implement grounded theory as our method of analysis. Bryman and Bell (2013) describe this method as a way of building theory from empirical data. First, we started analysing the gathered data and identified recurring themes which we secondly categorised and followed up on. From the last three interviews with virtual team members working out of Sweden, little new data was found that introduced new approaches to neither trust or satisfaction nor their relationship. This confirmed the data from these interviews were in line with what we had gathered earlier. Thus we confirmed theoretical saturation. According to Bryman and Bell (2013) this is the point where we can move on to generating hypotheses from the empirical data. Thirdly we validated the responses with transcription and fourthly coded the interview data with colour coding of key sentences.

After transcripts from the interviews were read thorough. For each subject, trust and satisfaction respectively we marked key sentences in the transcripts of the respondent's answers. In the next step of our process we colour coded each of the key sentences with similar thoughts and opinions represented by a separate colour. All marked sentences were then placed in groups sorted by colour. From the groups formed key words were highlighted in each sentence. Then the keywords were used to form nine distinct themes from the respondents’ answers. We use these themes to structure the presentation of our empirical data.

3.7.1. Validation of responses

After consent from the respondents we recorded and transcribed ten of our interviews. One respondent requested not to be recorded. During that particular interview we took notes of what was said as we rather performed the interview than risk missing out on important data. However in our empirical findings we have chosen not to use any citations from this interview as we cannot confirm the exact accuracy of our notes. Benefits gained from recording the interview data according to Bryman and Bell (2013) are the possibility to go through the data again, catching how the respondent answers and a better way to do a thorough analysis of what was said during the interview. As a complement to the transcripts we wrote summaries of each interview. The summaries were used as reference during the writing of the empirical findings to ensure we kept our findings aligned with the respondents’ answers.
To further strengthen the accuracy of our empirical data we used respondent validation. Our summary of the data from each interview and our interpretation of the data were sent back to the respondents via e-mail and they were given an opportunity to send us feedback on whether their true opinions were reflected. It is important to prevent the validation from turning into censoring.

Bryman and Bell (2013) argue this is especially important when managers are allowed to participate in the validation. We were aware of the potential risk during the validation, however no issues arose regarding this matter. In total we heard back from six out of the eleven respondents with confirmations regarding the accuracy of the data from their interviews. As the same methods were used during data collection and analysis of the last five interviews we can assume the data from those interviews to be accurate as well.

3.7.2. Translation

Up until recently translation of interview data has been considered as merely a technical process rather than a process of interpretation according to Bryman and Bell (2013). The opinion of Temple and Young (2004) is that methodological questions around translation has been neglected in research. This neglect imposes both epistemological and ontological consequences. Further identities and culture tied to the language are especially important to consider. To avoid losing valuable contextual data from our interviews performed interpretation and analysis of the data in our local language. An approach enabling us to assure possible cultural characteristics related to language and expressions are taken into consideration.

Craig and Douglas (2005) suggest using a method of independent translation to ensure translation equilibrium. When applicable one of us will translate data collected from the interviews with Dell from Swedish to English and then one of us will translate it back to Swedish again. We believe this is a sufficient method ensuring us a minimal amount of data is forfeit in the translation process.
3.8. Research ethics

To comply with general ethics questions regarding the interview procedure and our study we have analysed the procedures of our study based on Vetenskapsrådets (2002) four main principles of research ethics; information principles, informed consent, interview duration and anonymity. For the extent of this study we believe this is a sufficient approach to ensure we implement basic ethical guidelines in our work.

To comply with rule number one regarding information principles all participants were given a brief introduction to our study via phone or e-mail prior to the interviews. In addition we gave a more precise description of our study and the topics at hand during the introduction of the personal interviews (appendix A and B). We also made it clear no one is forced to participate and can stop answering questions at any time during the interview.

Regarding informed consent, rule number two we initially asked the e-leader of the team for permission to perform the interviews. This was followed up with all respondents during our initial contact and further confirmed during the introduction of the personal interviews.

The same goes for the duration of the interviews were we together with the team’s e-leader established a generic timeframe for each interview. Then we ensured all individual respondents were able to dedicate that amount of time. Further we informed them about their power to decide the terms of their participations when it comes to duration of the interview as well as the conditions. According to Vetenskapsrådet (2002) it is important there are no consequences if the respondent do decide to end the interview. Nor shall the respondent be pressured. By informing the participants of these conditions we make sure to comply with rule three and four.

The topic of anonymity was raised early on by the e-leader and is an important part of research ethics to consider according to Bryman and Bell (2013). The main concern was to protect individual virtual team members from being connected to specific answers or being identified in the group. The benefit of the anonymity for our study is that the virtual team members cannot be identified directly by the e-leader either which might make them feel more secure and enable them to speak more freely about their thoughts on the topic so that we can capture their true opinions.
3.9. Quality criteria

Reliability and validity are commonly used to ensure quality of research according to Alvehus (2013). However, they are in many cases closely related to measurement. As we made a clear stance in our delimitations not to measure we omitted validity and reliability as quality indicators of our study. Instead we used alternative criteria developed by qualitative researchers and suggested as quality criteria for quantitative studies by Bryman and Bell (2013). These are based on the two criteria trustworthiness and authenticity. In turn trustworthiness is analysed from four sub criteria.

Credibility is a sub criteria of trustworthiness and demands for validation of our presented results from the social constructs we have studied through our interviews. For our study this is ensured by the use of respondent validation. Transferability is an issue related to the empirical material and the possibility of our study being transferred to another context. We have provided a broad empirical description to enable others to make a valid reasoning regarding the transferability of our data as well as providing our own thoughts on transferability of the results. Dependability is ensured through rigorous work with the presentation of our methods and results allowing others to audit our study and judge it by the quality of the methods used. Which is important for dependability according to Bolderston (2012). Further Bryman and Bell (2013) list confirmability as the last sub criteria of trustworthiness. This is the practice of making sure our personal opinions do not affect the result as well as conducting our study in good faith. We chose to interview respondents which we have no personal connection to. Further to avoid inaccuracy or biases we interviewed respondents from different parts of the organisation and made requests regarding their experience to make sure they had appropriate experience and knowledge about the subject.

Authenticity as Bryman and Bell (2013) relate to it questions whether the study gives a fair and accurate presentation of the respondents' opinions. By recording and transcribing interviews, and by utilising respondent validation as described in chapter 3.5. we ensured best possible accuracy of our interpretations. By analysing our study from the perspective of these quality criteria we believe we have taken appropriate measures to ensure both trustworthiness and authenticity of our work.
3.10. Method critique

Qualitative methods are commonly criticised for the usually limited amount of respondents according to Bryman and Bell (2013). It is said this might limit possibilities for generalisation of the findings. We are aware of the fact that more respondents from other organisations might have given us more a broader empirical width. Due to the limited amount of time to perform our study we believe it would pose a risk on the quality of our findings to perform additional interviews and for us to still be able to process the data collected in a proper way. Our decision to work with one organisation is therefore well considered as we are convinced it will result in the best outcome regarding the quality of our study.

We decided to prepare and inform the respondents before the performance of interviews. Therefore we sent out the interview questions in advance. This prevents the interview to get unstructured and will increase the degree of compliance according to Hultman and Eriksson (2014).

We are aware of the fact that we only represented one organisation in our survey. The disadvantage of this as Bryman and Bell (2013) stress may be, it can lead to a bias as it might result in unknowingly similar answers since they probably have taken part of the same internal training and courses. We restrict our thesis in addition to take this context into account, such as corporate culture since our research aims to study each virtual team members experience with trust in the e-leader in combination with satisfaction in a professional setting.
4. Empirical findings

First we give a brief overview of the competitive environment where Dell operates, followed by a presentation of the themes identified in our empirical data. Based on the themes, we describe the virtual team members’ perceptions with reference to each theme. Lastly, we present the opinions of the e-leader.

4.1. Dell’s competitive environment

Dell operates in a fast paced environment characterised by a rapid development of new technologies and products. Business areas handled by the team interviewed consist of personal computers, communication technology, servers, storage and networking. The competition is fierce, usually profit margins from sales are low but the sales volumes are high. The strongest competitors are HP Inc, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Lenovo and Huawei who are fighting to grow and maintain their respective market shares. The organisation is very results driven and the staff and leaders are constantly measured by their achievements. Whether goals are met or not, are measured with KPI:s (Key Performance Indexes). KPI:s are common for the team as a whole as well as for the individual team members. To succeed in this environment you must be self-motivated and willing to put down hard work in order to reach your goals.

The organisation is mainly Scandinavian and virtual teams are common throughout the company. By using virtual teams Dell becomes more agile and can operate closer to their customers. Depending on your role, your manager will be located in one of the Scandinavian offices while your geographical area of responsibility may be located anywhere in the region. Some of the employees, usually employees with an overall responsibility in a particular area, have managers located at the EMEA office in addition to the regional manager.

4.2. Presentation of themes in the empirical data

As presented in table 3 the coding process led us to five themes regarding trust and four themes regarding satisfaction, the content of each theme is shortly presented with key words. Our presentation of the empirical data and the respondents’ answers is then presented and structured based on these themes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Personal integrity</td>
<td>• Percipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal connection</td>
<td>• Overall picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Enabler of meetings</td>
<td>• Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demotivation</td>
<td>• Trust issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Creativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Themes from interview data

4.2.1. Trust

Personal integrity is connected with a leadership where guidance and discussion is the solution when issues arise according to the team members. They also pointed out that it is vital to have confidence in the e-leader and to know that whatever is said to the e-leader it kept confidential.

Personal connection according to the team members is connected with being not only a team member in a virtual team, but also an individual where the e-leader has an open mind and see solutions outside the box.

Enabler of meetings is connected with the vitality of scheduled and recurring meetings, which is the key influencer to build trust in their e-leader. The meetings make the team member feel included and updated even when not physically present.

Demotivation is according to the members, connected with the consequences of distrust. A lack of trust is a major issue for the virtual team members. They highlighted that it reduces creativity as the virtual team members lose courage in their own capabilities.

According to the team members creativity is connected with trust in a matter where it affects the productivity and creativity of the team members. The virtual team members believe that their work performance and achievements are higher and better when they do have trust in their e-leader.
4.2.2. Satisfaction

Percipient is according to the members connected with satisfaction as a team member. They implied that when the e-leader is involved and encouraging, the team member feel satisfied. Getting to know the virtual team members, what motivates them and what their personal motivators are has a great impact on satisfaction.

The members responded that the overall picture is connected with the vitality of e-leading with an open approach to reach satisfaction where the e-leader invites to a dialogue instead of monologue and not engaging in micromanagement.

Engagement is according to the interviewed members connected with the team member feeling satisfied. When their e-leader engages with the individual member it makes it easier for the e-leader to be aware of the member’s feeling which increases the likelihood of satisfaction.

Lastly, trust issues are connected with trust for the leader and how it makes the team members feel good about to themselves. This according to the members is strongly related to how satisfied the individual team member is. Therefore if the members are satisfied they will do their best in everything they take on.

4.3. The virtual team members’ perspective on trust

4.3.1. Personal integrity

It is apparent that the personal integrity of the e-leader is an important factor of building trust for the virtual team members at Dell. They want - even though they in general are very self motivated - a leader who they can turn to for guidance and discussion when issues do arise. We understand that these issues not only derive from work related questions, but private issues affecting work as well. Therefore the virtual team members want to have a sense of confidence in the e-leader where they know the things they converse about will be kept private, confidential and be treated with dignity. “The leader shall be at hand if challenging or delicate situations arise. You can turn to your leader for guidance and ideas.” (Anonymous C).
Further, the virtual team members do expect the e-leader to have the same openness with issues arising from the leader's point of view. Although they do not expect personal issues to be ventilated, these expectations are focused around issues coming from inside the organisation and which may affect their work. In these cases the virtual team members expect the leader to openly inform and take leadership, make sure these issues are solved and not swept under the carpet.

4.3.2. Personal connection

In regard to the relationship the virtual team members want with their leader; personal, is a recurring word during the interviews. They want a connection with the leader not only as a team, but also at a more personal level. “The trust is between me and the leader” (Anonymous H). An e-leader who is genuine and has one’s back do adhere to this feeling of personal connection. In this personal connection the virtual team members expect their e-leader to be open minded, not absolute. Respecting other ways and suggestions from the virtual team members on how to perform tasks is important. This personal connection can easily be lost if the virtual team members do not get a sense of honesty from the e-leader. Honesty related to promises and the delivery of such promises.

From an international perspective a sense of greater distance is felt. The virtual team members working in the Danish office do however think their e-leader compensates for the distance by including them, to their understanding, as much as the employees located in Sweden. Concerns regarding distance is mainly raised by Anonymous A as he perceives differences between the Scandinavian e-leaders and his e-leader located in France. “The distance shifts focus from a more personal level to more focus on targets and things easily measured” (Anonymous A). Indicating the greater the distance, the harder the effort to connect personally with the employees might be.

4.3.3. Enabler of meetings

Without exceptions regular meetings were highlighted by the virtual team members as a key influencer to build trust in their e-leader. These meetings should be both scheduled and recurring. “Regular meetings make you feel included and you know what is coming” (Anonymous G).
Preferably the meetings include topics both related to the business and personal development. “The most important thing is that you have meetings, you use the time and you arrive at something constructive.” (Anonymous A). Anonymous thinks a good way of improving the quality of the meetings for the e-leader is to take time to present reasons for decisions not only the decisions themselves. Follow ups between the meetings are mentioned by some virtual team members, however, none of the respondents are able to specify what type of follow ups are expected.

During the scheduled meetings the e-leader is expected to dedicate his time to the virtual team member and be focused. “It is important to take time for one another” (Anonymous F). Again, with the virtual team member who has an e-leader in France, the distance spring to mind as less time is dedicated to these kind of meetings. The general stance is that these meetings are held for the sake of the virtual team member, not the e-leader. The focus on the virtual team members gives a feeling of an agenda designed with the employees best at mind. In between scheduled meetings there must be ways of communicating which feel as natural as bumping into each other at the office. Phone or Skype calls are the means of communication mostly used by the virtual team members for this type of communication. It is beneficial for the e-leader to gain trust from the virtual team members rather quickly according to Anonymous C and Anonymous G. When the e-leader gives the virtual team members attention during scheduled meetings and availability to communicate when needed, they get a sense of support and the time to build trust is shortened.

**4.3.4. Demotivation**

During the interviews the potential lack of trust came out as a major issue for the virtual team members at Dell. Lack of trust makes it increasingly harder to judge whether the e-leader thinks that the tasks you are performing are executed in a satisfactory manner. Ultimately resulting in a feeling of being antagonised and inefficient at work. Aligning perceptions might help in reducing these feelings, it may also reduce the risk of false expectations from the leader. However most virtual team members find it harder to know if you are on the same page as the leader when working remotely in comparison to communicating face-to-face.
A solution suggested by Anonymous B is to write down what the e-leader says during meetings and send it back to the e-leader for confirmation. “Without trust you do not get motivated to deliver results” (Anonymous A). The lack of trust in the e-leader reduces creativity as the virtual team members lose courage in their own capabilities and feel hindered to be as productive as they want.

Further their ways of working get less creative as you do not want to think outside of the box when you lack trust in your e-leader. Because the virtual team members interviewed at Dell work with sales, it is common with shifts in performance counter results. In such situations where results are shown long after the tasks has been performed, lack of trust makes both the virtual team members and their e-leader feel insecure regarding actual deliverables. “When you have no trust in each other you are out on a very slippery slope” (Anonymous E).

### 4.3.5. Creativity

Trust in the e-leader affects creativity and productivity, these opinions are unanimous amongst the virtual team members interviewed. Trust leads to feelings of appreciation in turn fostering a positive spirit. In the end the virtual team members think their work performance and achievements are higher and better when they do have trust in their e-leader. Trust in the e-leader also leads to higher self confidence and trust in their own capabilities, thus making them more creative and eager to take on projects in creative ways. “Crazy ideas” (Anonymous C), as a reference to thinking outside the box and coming up with better solutions.

The creativity and productivity at work is also enhanced by trust gained from having an optimistic e-leader who inspires hope and handles crisis. “When you as a member of the virtual team are dedicated to your success in some way” (Anonymous D). One of the respondents, in contrast to the others, does however reduce the importance of building trust as an e-leader since the respondent's opinion is more based on a personal responsibility to perform at your best at all times as a team member and to be self motivated no matter what your relation may be to the e-leader.
4.4. The Virtual team members’ perspective of satisfaction

4.4.1. Percipient

The team members highlighted the importance of having an e-leader who listens, gives guidance and encourages them to feel satisfied: “It is important the leader has my back and is dedicated to my success” (Anonymous C). Even if you may not be seated together with your leader it is vital as a team member to feel that the leader still gives you a pad on the back, virtually, when creating something thriving or contributes to the company's success.

According to the team members moreover, it is vital for the e-leader to identify what motivates them, values are very important but also for the leader to be responsive. Knowing what the individual feels and thereupon identify situations where the leader knows that the individual team member can experience difficulties. “Satisfaction varies from individual to individual and the leader therefore has to treat each individual as an individual” (Anonymous B). Getting to know the virtual team members on a personal level, what motivates them and what their personal motivators are evidently have a great impact on overall satisfaction.

4.4.2. Overall picture

Some team members also stressed the importance of the e-leader having an open approach to reach satisfaction. Thus, invites to a dialogue instead of monologue and not engaging in micromanagement. Instead the e-leader is expected to give guidance and paint the bigger picture. Overall targets, company visions and the current business situation. This enables the virtual team members to feel more involved and part of something important. “Painting the whole picture contributes to satisfaction in a positive way” (Anonymous D)

4.4.3. Engagement

The team members agreed that the e-leader engaging in the individual member is very significant to feel satisfied. Having open and direct communication about how the member is feeling at the moment satisfies the member. Being available as an e-leader according to the team members does not necessarily mean being contactable night and day.
Moreover it means following up with periodic individual performance appraisals as the member can openly talk about what is important for them whereas the leader is “taking the time for my sake and not for his” (Anonymous A).

Nevertheless, the e-leader must get to know the team member properly and ask questions what the leader himself/herself can do to help the member to develop and grow in their work.

4.4.4. Trust issues

Common for the team members is that they could relate trust with satisfaction. The trust for the leader makes them feel good and is strongly related to how satisfied the individual team member is. If the member is satisfied they will do their best at everything they take on. If the individual member does not have trust in the e-leader then the e-leader, would not have trust in the member which would create an uncomfortable but more importantly an untenable situation whereas no one gets satisfied in their work environment. Trust issues are therefore the major reason people leave their jobs since it leads to unsatisfied employees. Well put, one of the members said "trust nurtures satisfaction" (Anonymous D).

A single member out of ten did not really believe that trust can be connected with work satisfaction. This member indicated that “one should distinguish between functional, professional role and the person per se” (Anonymous J).

4.5. E-leader’s perspective

The e-leader of Dell expressed the importance of building trust and a relationship by conversing with each other, have a dialogue to gain trust. As a matter of fact, the e-leader suggested the best way of maintaining the trust is to schedule recurring fixed times, which makes the leader available for the members he stated that “I ensure that those who work for me find an availability in me” (Anonymous K). However this does not mean the leader has to be available all the time. When the members know that they have fixed points where they can interact they do not need the face-to-face interaction, although they need interaction with the e-leader’s full attention.
The e-leader implied that the struggle with leading a virtual team is the lack of body language, a vital part of interacting with your members. He indicates that “it will always be that it is easier to understand a person when you have them in front of you” (Anonymous K). Nevertheless, it takes longer to gain trust with a geographical distance since it is more difficult to open up to someone you do not have in front of you. Trust is dependent on the individual and a leader will never be able to find out what makes an employee happy without gaining their trust and the work of gaining trust could prevent conflicts and problems from emerging. The e-leader indicated that once you gain trust as a leader in a virtual team, the members want to tell what affects their job situation also from their private sphere. The trust also leads to being able to take part of what affects a worker’s efficiency and motivation. The pitfall, as the e-leader found, is that you may not find out what affects the members daily lives. This could result in a member who do not get the satisfaction they need in their work situation and the leader will never know why. That is why the balance is the key to a satisfied member.

Another vital part of e-leading is to assure your members is pleased to get up and go to work. The e-leader implies that a satisfied employee is a motivated and happy employee who enjoys what they do, “satisfaction is dependent on the individual and you will never be able to find out what makes a member satisfied if you do not have a relationship with trust” (Anonymous K).

To find out what makes a member happy and satisfied, you need to have their trust. According to the e-leader of Dell the easiest way to determine if an employee is satisfied is to ask the question. But in order to be able to get an honest answer and genuine feedback it requires the e-leader to have the member’s trust. This could also prevent conflicts and problems to emerge. To get the feedback needed to improve as an e-leader the manager can schedule employee conferences or anonymous surveys. This way the e-leader can find out what keeps employees from reaching their full potential. It is important to find out what each individual virtual team member considers important to them.
To gain genuine feedback the e-leader also might ask challenging questions, such as what motivates the member from an employment perspective. “The members could also rank a list, maybe 30-40 things that would make them satisfied” (Anonymous K). By using the approach with the list and ranking of important motivators the e-leader gains important insight into the individual's feelings of satisfaction. However, it is important to remember to follow-up on this list, as other things might be important or motivating for that particular employee after a certain period of time has passed.
5. Analysis and discussions

The findings in the data collected are discussed further, taking our earlier theoretical findings and using them to strengthen what was said during interviews. As the analysis and discussions proceed we look to find how the e-leader builds trust and satisfaction in a virtual team, how the virtual team members’ trust in the e-leader is related to the satisfaction of the individual virtual team members and what the benefits are of a virtual team in which the members feel trust and satisfaction.

Trust in the e-leader correlates with virtual team efficiency according to Tsen and Ku (2011) and Ford et al. (2016). Further satisfaction is correlated with virtual team efficiency according to Cicei (2012). Our gap derives from the matter of how trust in the e-leader can enhance the virtual team members’ satisfaction and thus in the extension increase team efficiency even further. From our empirical data we have identified three relationships between techniques exercised to build trust which also seem to increase the satisfaction of the virtual team members according to the data from our interviews. Each of them which is carefully analysed and discussed before we proceed to make our final conclusions. From the themes stated in table 3 and the theoretical model in figure 1 we designed three main headings of our analysis and discussion that contains relationship and communication, team spirit and individual focus, all of which we find connected with trust and satisfaction.

We now return to figure 1. After analysing our empirical data, we propose the following relationship in figure 3. Trust in the e-leader according to the members is strongly connected to their job satisfaction. Nevertheless, a virtual team member’s trust in the e-leader is not given, it's earned whereas the e-leader need to build trust to make the individual team member satisfied. By building a relationship with communication, contributing to team spirit and having an individual focus on the individual virtual team member the e-leader can gain trust which contributes to satisfaction.
5.1. Relationship and communication

After interviewing both the e-leader and the virtual team members, we found answers that were surprisingly similar when the team members told their point of view on their relationship with the e-leader. The similarities can be an indication that Dell has found an effective way of working with their virtual teams to ensure member’s trust in the e-leader and overall satisfaction.

Ford et al. (2016) indicate teams with great degrees of trust are more focused and efficient. While Cicei (2012) concluded satisfaction as another contributor of effectiveness. The relationship between the virtual team member and the e-leader can evidently enact both trust and satisfaction. Virtual team members clearly expressed lack of trust in the e-leader as what they felt were a downright demotivator. Leaving them with a feeling of being unmotivated and inefficient at work.

The e-leader is well aware of this situation and practices different methods of building trust within the virtual team. The most predominant being the recurring scheduled meetings which he has with all his employees. He dedicates his time and full attention to the individual team member during these meetings in order to keep them motivated and effective. All the interviewed team members mentioned these meetings as key contributors to their overall trust in the e-leader. The meetings give them the personal connection they expect to the e-leader and a sense of being a part of, and a contributor to the company's overall success. We can also see from a more international perspective how the e-leader based in France, outside of Scandinavia, failed to give this dedicated time to his virtual team members resulting in less dedication according to one of the respondents.
As Wise (2013), conclude trust is considered one of the basis for developing successful virtual teams. Dell has clearly taken this in consideration and implemented ways of ensuring their virtual team members have trust in their e-leaders. In short, they have made sure the e-leader has a relationship with each individual virtual team member, giving them the dedication and time they need to feel confidence and have trust in the e-leader. Further the virtual team members indicated that the feeling of trust in the e-leader makes them feel good and therefore, is strongly related to how satisfied they are. As we were told during the interviews this motivates them and they want to give their very best performance at everything they take on. Another benefit of this approach mentioned by the e-leader is the employee's willingness to have discussions regarding what affects their work situation when trust is established. As he puts it this is vital for his ability to nurture his personal connection to the virtual team members.

These answers go well in hand with the conclusions by Cicei (2012) who connects communication and leadership as enablers of satisfaction. The meetings are part of withholding and enabling means of communication between the e-leader and the virtual team members. The importance of these personal meetings was stressed by all respondents as they clearly want to have direct communication with their leader.

Another vital variable was what Gilson et al. (2014) described as the fundamental matter of how to achieve satisfaction. Gilson et al. (2014) mean that as long as variables such as conflicts are managed by the e-leader the team members can feel satisfied. We connected this with the e-leader himself saying that his work of gaining trust could prevent conflicts and problems from emerging. Commonly the team members said that when an e-leader knows what the individual member is feeling he or she can easier identify situations where a conflict could occur whereas the leader know that the individual team member might experience difficulties.

The e-leader at Dell builds trust by giving his virtual team members dedicated time and recurring meetings and thus keeps levels of frequent communication high. The increased trust is confirmed by the virtual team members, but they do however also refer to this communication setup as an important factor of their satisfaction as well. From the interview data it is obvious that both trust and satisfaction can be increased by working with communication.
5.2. Team spirit

Being a part of something appear to be important to the virtual team members at Dell. Because the environment is characterised by hard competition and a constant struggle to stay on top of the competitors, the e-leader must have a clear vision. Some of the respondents referred to the bigger picture. They wanted their e-leader to step away from the details and show the direction of the company and their team. The preference of overall guidance before micromanagement.

One of the main benefits of virtual teams according to Bergiel et al. (2008) is not only the flexibility of its workers, but also location wise but also allowing them to be agile. Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015) claims it is beneficial for the firms to allow flexibility for its workers. Research apparently is aligned with how the virtual team members at Dell want their work to be structured by the e-leader. As with communication and relationships this view is shared by the e-leader too. He tries to interfere only when needed. Instead he gives guidance and show the direction, what they want to achieve, a framework for success.

The team members claimed this made their trust in the e-leader increase as it enabled them to work together as a virtual team towards a common goal. Finding common goals for international virtual teams is of great importance according to Zander et al. (2013) as they have no natural gathering points. In the respondent's thoughts on satisfaction they linked the very same way of thinking to increased satisfaction as well because the overall picture and their common goals. We think the increased satisfaction comes from them knowing where they are going, what difference the work they do today will have tomorrow.

5.3. Individual focus

The e-leader stressed the fact that trust is dependent on the individual as well as the team members’ highlighting the importance of being treated like an individual in a virtual team. The feeling of being an individual and not just a number on payroll is vital for the virtual team member to open up and be able to build trust in the e-leader.
According to Ford et al. (2016) it is vital for the e-leader to identify important cues for trust such as rewarding performance both on a group basis but nevertheless on an individual basis. The e-leader agrees it is important as a leader to know what the individual team member feels and identify situations where the leader knows that the individual team member can experience difficulties. As he said, satisfaction varies from individual to individual and thereupon the individual needs to be treated as an individual.
6. Conclusion and remarks

We targeted a business organisation to further increase the understanding of e-leadership and its implications in a professional setting. Our aim was to answer how the e-leader build trust and satisfaction in a virtual team, how the virtual team members trust in the e-leader is related to the satisfaction of the individual virtual team members and what the benefits are of a virtual team in which virtual the members feel trust and satisfaction. In this section we summarise and present our overall conclusions to render the findings we made in the study.

6.1. Conclusion

RQ1: In business organisation, how does an e-leader build trust that contributes to satisfaction in a virtual team?

We found three focus areas connected to the e-leaders’ trust building efforts which also had a positive impact on perceived satisfaction;

- relationship and communication
- team spirit
- individual focus

RQ2: How does trust in the e-leader contribute to perceived satisfaction of a virtual team member?

Our results show that trust in the e-leader has a positive impact on the virtual team members’ perceived satisfaction.

RQ3: What are the benefits of a virtual team in which the members feel trust and satisfaction?

Our findings from the interviews show that the virtual team members are more dedicated to their work when they feel both trust and satisfaction.
Common for the team members was that they related trust with satisfaction very strongly. We found the relationship we were searching for, resulting in how the team members trust in the e-leader is strongly related to how satisfied the individual team member is. We found out that organisations cannot afford dissatisfied members according to Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015), as they will not only perform up to the standards but also the expectations. Therefore, according to Rico et al. (2009) consequently satisfaction is examined with regard to trust. Our contribution to the studies in this field have clarified how a relationship occurs between trust in a virtual teams’ e-leader and the virtual team members’ satisfaction. It also gives a deeper understanding of how maintenance of trust is fundamental to satisfy an employee. Nevertheless according to Ford et al. (2016) and Aziri (2011) the e-leaders need to ensure they build sustainable and trustworthy relationships because satisfaction represents one of the most difficult areas facing today’s e-leaders when it comes to leading their teams.

We have contributed to the studies in the field as our result showed how trust is mainly based on the e-leader engaging, gaining a relationship and communication with the virtual team members. When the e-leader focuses on the team members during scheduled meetings and is available to communicate when needed, the team members get a sense of support and a feeling of individual focus. This moreover leads to higher self confidence and trust in their own capabilities, thus making them more creative and eager to take on projects in creative ways and in the long run the vital team spirit, and being part of something is encouraged.

We contributed to the field of study since we found that engagement was one of the fundamentals to feel satisfied according to the team members. When the e-leader takes the time to identify what motivates the individual member and to be responsive, the individual team member feels satisfied.

Gilson et al. (2014) believed contributing to dissatisfaction were low visibility and low access to information as stated in the theory. We believe it was easier for the respondents in the virtual team to identify what dissatisfaction and distrust will result in rather than satisfaction and trust.

We have contributed to the studies in this field because we explored that lack of trust makes it harder to judge whether the e-leader think tasks you are performing are executed in a satisfactory manner which we think is a vital matter for the relationship between trust and satisfaction.
Also the team member implied that if the individual member does not have trust in the e-leader then the e-leader will not trust in the member which will lead to unsatisfied members. As found during the interviews, distrust is one of the main reasons employees leave, because they are unsatisfied. We believe our study contributed to the studies in the field when we identified a relationship that shows a strong reason why it is fundamental to gain trust as an e-leader in order to be able to satisfy a virtual team member.

*Figure 4* shows a deeper understanding for *figure 1* after conducting our study. Instead of generalising, *figure 4* highlights our findings and conclusions from the data collected whereas we have filled in the additional positive effects of trust building with the will to maximize performance and the individual members continuous improvement. After conducting the study we extended the relationship between trust and satisfaction with our conclusions, relationship and communication, team spirit and individual focus.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 4. Summary of findings from our study*

### 6.2. Limitations

In this study we have contributed to the studies in this field by focusing on virtual team members in a business organisation and analysing how the e-leader builds trust and satisfaction in a virtual team. How the virtual team members trust in the e-leader is related to the satisfaction of the individual virtual team members and what the benefits are of a virtual team in which the members feel trust and satisfaction. This has been done by conducting a qualititative study of one single organisation, Dell. During the study we were informed of competitors to Dell in the tech sector with similar setups. It is likely our results from the study can be applied to these similar companies too.
However there is a probability that there are differences in how this relationship exists and affect the virtual team members depending on organisational structure, leadership and other factors not known to us. Therefore there is a possibility that data collected could differ if the same research had been implemented in other organisations. We believe a wider research including more than one organisation or from organisations in other types of businesses may clarify this.

6.3. Suggestions for further research

We believe there is a number of other variables in the area of our study that needs further research. Firstly we believe further research could examine how a relationship occur between trust in a virtual team’s e-leader and the satisfaction of the individual virtual team members in the long term, using a longitudinal method. We believe the method would provide a deeper understanding of the benefits for the organisation in the long term from the relationship between trust in a virtual team’s e-leader and the satisfaction of the individual virtual team members. Secondly we believe the results could be further generalised by conducting similar studies in additional organisations. We also believe organisations other than high tech companies could give a result interesting to compare to our findings.

While collecting data we found one exceptional virtual team member that in contradiction to the other team members, did not believe there was a relationship between trust in the e-leader and satisfaction of the individual virtual team member. Thirdly we therefore consider it necessary to further research the cause of this. Mainly by identifying other factors of satisfaction besides trust in the e-leader. What else could be related to satisfaction in an organisational setting?

6.4. Theoretical implications

As we found during our methodological considerations previous studies focused mainly on quantitative comparison of traditional face-to-face teams and virtual teams. Additionally these studies were almost exclusively conducted in educational settings. Researchers called for a shift to qualitative studies in organisational settings. By focusing solely on virtual teams and taking a qualitative approach we believe we have taken a first step in this direction. The relationship we have identified between trust and satisfaction can be used as a theoretical foundation in future work regarding virtual teams.
Our initial research regarding virtual teams showed there were few studies about trust and satisfaction in virtual teams and therefore a lack of knowledge in that particular area of virtual team research. With our study we have taken a first step to start filling this theoretical gap and provide a theory regarding the relationship between trust and satisfaction in virtual teams. Thus providing a foundation which can be further built upon to expand the knowledge about how trust and satisfaction affects the e-leader and the virtual team members from a theoretical point of view.

6.5. Practical implications

This study explored how the e-leader builds trust and satisfaction in a virtual team, how the virtual team members trust in the e-leader is related to the satisfaction of the individual virtual team members and what the benefits are of a virtual team in which virtual the members feel trust and satisfaction. The findings raise several practical implications for the virtual team management. Our study showed three main areas where trust can be related to satisfaction. As previous research has shown links between both trust and satisfaction to virtual team effectiveness practitioners can focus on these three to increase both trust and satisfaction and in the long run their virtual teams’ effectiveness.

First is relationship and communication. Where team members in our study sought for recurring and scheduled meetings where the e-leader were dedicated and focused on just them. These meetings should handle both business matters and private matters affecting work performance. The more internationally spread the team is, the more the leader has to focus on having these meetings.

Second team spirit makes sure everyone in the virtual team has a common interest and common goal. This helps the team members to know where the organisations are heading and how their work today affects the future. It also shows the e-leaders dedication to moving the team forward. This guidance and encouragement showed an increase in satisfaction along with trust.

Third focus on the individual. It is important not to forget about the individual team members. Our findings show the importance of an e-leader engaging in the individual member. This will lead to trust and a team member willing to both receive and give feedback to the e-leader. Which can help the e-leader to understand the individual team member and improve as a leader too.
References


Appendices

Appendix A - Interview guide virtual team member

Introduction

- Short introduction to our thesis, and the subjects at hand, trust and satisfaction.
- Practicalities, anonymity, not mandatory to answer all questions, anonymity.
- Open-ended questions.
- Please give a brief description of yourself, your role at Dell and Dell as a company.
- Recording of interview?

Subject 1: Trust

1. Describe what determines whether you trust your e-leader or not?
2. What do you think is the most important an e-leader can do for you to feel trust in him / her?
3. How do you experience the feeling of trust in your e-leader is affecting your work?

Subject 2: Satisfaction

1. What can the e-leader do to make you feel satisfied at work?
2. What impact do you think your trust in your e-leader has on how satisfied you feel at work?
3. Can you give examples of how you find your e-leader working to make you feel satisfied?
Appendix B - Interview guide e-leader

Introduction

- Short introduction to our thesis, and the subjects at hand, trust and satisfaction.
- Practicalities, anonymity, not mandatory to answer all questions, anonymity.
- Open ended questions.
- Please give a brief description of yourself, your role at Dell and Dell as a company.
- Recording of interview?

Trust

1. Tell us how you are working with your employees to make them feel trust in you as an e-leader?
2. Do you feel that the work you do to build trust is hampered as all your employees are not physically located in the same office, but rather spread geographically?
3. What do you see as positive effects of your employees trust in you as an e-leader?

Satisfaction

1. Describe what you as an e-leader believe are satisfied employees?
2. Can you give examples of how to determine if an employee is satisfied with their work situation?
3. What do you think is most significant for your employees to feel satisfied?