

THE VIRTUAL TEAMS POCKETBOOK

By Ian Fleming

Drawings by Phil Hailstone

"Insightful and thought provoking – a must read for prospective virtual team leaders and members in today's rapid global economy."

James Mullican

President, Advanced Waste Management Systems Inc., USA

"Tie it to your desk, don't lend it to a friend, this is such a valuable resource that you will never see it again. If you have to plan and manage a virtual team this is the book you have been waiting for."

Ray Sleeman

Director, The Tourism and Leisure Group Ltd, New Zealand

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MAKING TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR YOU

WHERE ARE YOU STARTING FROM?



Virtual teams have been made possible owing to developments in technology.

We are all making much more use of email, phone and internet in our everyday lives. However, do we really know what such technology can do and use it to its full potential?

A tip is to find out what people know and can do early on in the life of any team. It may be that increasing people's knowledge and skill base needs to be a priority for your team.

The choice of technology – what you have and how you will use it – is a critical decision.

MAKING TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR YOU

THE PURPOSE OF TECHNOLOGY



You want technology to help you as a team:

- Know what's happening at all times
- Understand where your contribution fits into the *big picture*
- Get in touch with each other quickly, as and when required
- Share information and get answers to questions



MAKING TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR YOU

REAL TIME & ASYNCHRONOUS



There are two types of technologies that you can use.

Real time – updating information at the same rate or time as it is received, eg:

- Instant messaging
- Chat rooms
- Whiteboard
- Video conferencing
- Audio conferencing
- Email

Asynchronous – not existing at the same time:

- Discussion boards
- File share
- Web share

MAKING TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR YOU

INSTANT MESSAGING



Technology has changed the way we communicate. Emails have replaced letters and the phone offers a range of innovative ways of contacting each other.

Instant messaging (IM) allows you to:

- Create your own team chat room
- Send text notes back and forth to colleagues
- Share links to relevant websites
- Create and share images
- Share files by sending them directly to people
- Keep up-to-date using *real time* or near *real time* information and news



MAKING TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR YOU

INSTANT MESSAGING – CHAT ROOMS



Chat rooms have become one of the fastest-growing segments of the internet, partly because many young people find them great fun.

Most *chat* is text-based where conversation is typed, with the message appearing immediately on the screen. Increasingly, audio-based chat is being offered, requiring a computer with a microphone and speakers. This allows the potential to chat to your team members while they are online.



MAKING TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR YOU

INSTANT MESSAGING – TEXT



Text messaging is the common name for SMS, Short Message Service. It's ideal for quick messages to people's mobile phones and normally cheaper than a mobile phone call. There's a high probability that your message will be read, and responded to if required.

Texting is:

- Affordable with low or no set up costs
- Simple to use
- Quick, and it is easy to send the same message to several people
- Instant – messages are in most cases delivered in seconds
- Global – SMS text can be sent to almost anyone in the world
- A cost-effective way of keeping your team involved

MAKING TECHNOLOGY WORK FOR YOU

INSTANT MESSAGING



Pros

- Interactive, informal and *real time*
- Helps as a way to check on people's availability
- Enables you to get replies to questions and information for decisions
- Can be more effective than email for resolving issues quickly
- Can be used for one-to-one or conference mode

Cons

- Not all applications will connect with each other – **your team needs to agree on a common system**
- Security, reliability and spam are potential issues and need to be guarded against
- Intrusive into your personal life – does that sound familiar?

About the Author

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