

Management framework for people, processes and places in the virtual workplace

Dr Ilse Geldenhuys, Prof Carina de Villiers and Prof Trish Alexander

A study conducted by three researchers at the University of Pretoria explored how virtual workers executed their activities through the use of technology, the type of business processes supporting them and the challenges experienced. The proposed framework for the management of people, processes and places in the virtual workplace was subsequently derived.

The framework aims to represent the relationship between the people, processes and places components in the virtual workplace, thus providing a management framework that supports the virtual workplace. These three components have been incorporated into management, technology and practice components, thereby providing a framework based on the relationship between people, processes and places.

The newly developed framework is discussed based on the management, technology and practice components (based on people, processes and places). The relationships identified and discussed include business process maturity, understanding of the difference between business process management and business process improvement, governance, support structure, the integration of business process tools and the feasibility of the infrastructure. The framework thus provides structure to the management of people, processes and places in the virtual workplace.

Management

The management areas of attention identified during the research relate to business process maturity, understanding business process management, active change realisation and establishing an enabling culture and support structure.

Following on the aforementioned people component

is the process portion related to management. The process portion has a correlation with business process maturity, understanding business process management and the business process support structure. The virtual workplace has specific

management challenges, as the workplace is off-site or remote and sometimes outside the borders of the country. The places component focuses on establishing an enabling culture, the types of virtual workplaces, the types of work appropriate to the virtual workplace and infrastructure requirements.

The management challenges related to the management of people, processes and places in the virtual workplace have a multiple relationship, thus emphasising that the components cannot be viewed in isolation. This connectedness is evident in the establishment of an enabling culture, understanding business process management, the need for a business process support structure and infrastructure feasibility.

Technology

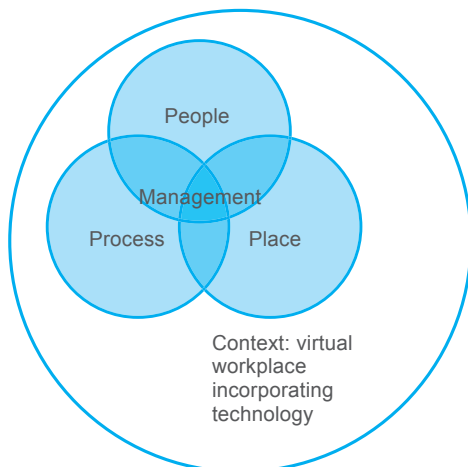
The technology component of the framework is covered as an essential part of the virtual environment. As part of the people component, streamlined network accessibility, the need for integrated business process tools and the use of social networks were identified as areas requiring attention. The process portion of technology relates to process technologies, such as single-source and process

The virtual workplace has specific management challenges, as the workplace is off-site or remote and sometimes outside the borders of the country.

support, including data integrity. Technology supporting the virtual workplace relates to the feasibility and sustainability of infrastructure and has a bearing on the management component. The technology component's challenges relate to



→ Management framework for the components of the virtual workplace.



→ Management, people, processes and places in the context of the virtual workplace.

streamlined network accessibility and establishing an integrated, single source of information that is accessible from remote locations. There is a connection between people, processes and places, again emphasising that this topic cannot be viewed in isolation.

Practice

The third component of the management of people, processes and places in the virtual workplace is practice, and follows the central theme of identifying relationships. Creating an understanding of business process management, developing skilled resources and having clear communication were identified as important areas within the people component.

The process portion includes process technology, licensing and governance requirements, while the places portion includes feasibility of infrastructure and help desk support as identified. The practice portion discussed the need to understand business process management and addressed the need for business process governance and a standardised business process methodology. The relationship between business process management tools, licences and the help desk support is evident. 📌

Dr Ilse Geldenhuys has a BCom degree and an MBA. Her PhD focused on research in the virtual workplace.

Prof Carina de Villiers was head of the Department of Informatics at the University of Pretoria from 2000 until 2011. She is currently a full professor in the department.

Prof Trish Alexander is an associate professor in the Department of Informatics. The use of computer-mediated communication by virtual teams is one of her research interests.