Unleashing the Potential in Virtual World: Opportunities and Challenges for Non-profit and Education

Research Article DOI: 10.59600/ijcae.v1i2.8

Mgr. Jan Vrba, MSc, MBA, DBA, D. Phil
Faculty of Administration and Economic Studies in Uherské Hradiště, Toruńska Szkoła Wyższa - Akademia Jagiellońska, Poland, jan.vrba@fves.eu

Abstract

The rise of virtual organizations has brought a significant transformation in the way businesses and non-profit organizations operate. This paper provides an overview of a virtual organizations management, effective virtual team management strategies, and the impact of virtualization on non-profit organizations. The study finds that virtual organizations offer several benefits, including flexibility, adaptability, and cost-effectiveness, along with easy access to a pool of freelancers who can perform various types of work. However, effective communication, coordination, and a culture of trust, accountability, and collaboration are essential for their success. The research also examines online interventions in non-profit organizations, specifically the virtual day center, which provides a safe and relaxed space for young people to meet and talk. The study suggests that online interventions can be implemented in harm reduction programs and can increase substance abuse prevention efforts.

Keywords: Virtual organizations, virtual team management, non-profit organizations, online interventions, harm reduction programs.
1. Introduction

In recent years, the emergence and growth of virtual organizations have brought about a significant transformation in the way businesses and non-profit organizations operate. The introduction of new technologies, especially the Internet and the ubiquitous availability of digital communication tools, has enabled organizations to operate virtually, without the need for a physical presence in a specific location. Virtual organizations are organizations whose members are geographically dispersed but connected through digital channels. Virtual organizations are growing in popularity due to their flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and adaptability. This new operational model has also been adopted by non-profit organizations, which has created new opportunities for collaboration, fundraising, and advocacy.

This research paper examines virtual organization administration and virtual non-profit organizations. It examines the challenges and opportunities associated with managing virtual organizations, effective virtual team management strategies, and the impact of virtualization on non-profit organizations.

2. Literature Overview

Božić (2023) states that to gauge the efficiency of virtual organizations (VO/VOs), it is critical to assess several significant factors, such as VO models, monitoring techniques using business activity monitoring (BAM), activity logs for roles, performance evaluation, measurement of VO and key performance indicator (KPI) efficiency, time and space utilization, productivity, communication and collaboration tools, team dynamics, leadership, and individual performance. According to Božić (2023), these factors can significantly influence the productivity of VOs and the economy by facilitating novel and inventive ways for organizations to collaborate and innovate; virtual Organizations (VOs) play a crucial role in driving innovation and progress in the economy.

Effective monitoring requires utilizing BAM strategies to track KPIs, measuring individual performance using role activity logs, and assessing key performance indicators and successful virtual organizations, such as Automattic, GitLab, Toptal, and Zapier, allow users to automate workflows across diverse applications and
services; also these companies serve as models for effective virtual organizational practices and demonstrate how VOs can be used to drive growth and success in the modern digital landscape (Božić, 2023).

The same author (Božić, 2023) adds that virtual organizations provide businesses with a range of benefits, including heightened flexibility, adaptability, and cost-effectiveness, along with easy access to a pool of freelancers who can perform various types of work. However, to succeed in a virtual environment, effective communication, coordination, and a culture of trust, accountability, and collaboration are essential; as the business landscape continues to evolve at a rapid pace, virtual organizations will become even more critical for companies to maintain their competitiveness and adapt to changing market conditions (Božić, 2023).

It can be stated that in a virtual organization, companies can take advantage of the latest technology to connect with freelancers from around the world, enabling them to access a broader range of skills and expertise.

Example of Virtual Aspect in a non-for-profit Organisation may be as well described by Sande et al. (2022) on the example of online interventions mechanisms that can be implemented in harm reduction programs.

Sande et al. (2022) also conducted research concerning potential of online interventions, specifically the virtual day centre, which provides a safe and relaxed space for young people and which is accessible and where they feel welcome. The research suggests that (Sande et al., 2022):

- The sample group consisted of 18 adolescents between the ages of 16 and 25. The majority (5) were 20 years old, and the mean age was 20 and a half. In the sample, there were eight men, nine women, and one individual who identified as non-binary.
- Three-quarters of the participants were from 'non-normative' families, and the majority of the cohort had divorced or single parents. Depression, self-harm, anxiety, suicidality, panic attacks, and anxiety were among the mental health issues and distress exhibited by the sample at or before the time of the interview.
Author (Sande, et al., 2022) used an accompanying questionnaire for assessing the fundamental characteristics of the sample, including socioeconomic status, residence at the time of the study, and the prevalence of various risk factors in the family and psychosocial distress among the participants.

Sande et. al. (2022) also suggests that in a result, the majority (15) of the sample's youth resided with their primary family, while one lived independently, in a residential school, and with their mother and stepfather. Online interventions that can be implemented in harm reduction programs have the potential to increase substance abuse prevention efforts, according to the study's findings. The sample comprised of 18 adolescents between the ages of 16 and 25 at the time of the interviews. The mean age was 20 and a half, and the plurality (5) were 20 years old. There were eight men, nine women, and one individual who identified as non-binary in the sample (Sande et. al., 2022).

Author (Sande, et al., 2022) also finds out that the majority (15) of the sample's youth lived with their primary family, with one individual residing independently, in a boarding school, and with their mother and stepfather. Three-quarters of the participants were from 'non-normative' families, and the majority of the cohort had divorced or single parents. Depression, self-harm, anxiety, suicidality, panic attacks, and anxiety were among the mental health issues and distress exhibited by the sample at or before the time of the interview (Sande et. al., 2022).

The findings of the study indicate that online interventions that can be implemented in harm reduction programs have the potential to increase substance use prevention efforts (Aande et. Al, 2022).

Other authors (e.g., Vidak, Tobić, & Kovačević, 2023) also suggest the significance of networking in non-for-profit organisations. Their analysis has revealed that non-profit organizations use social networks in their daily operations for both communication and transparency. Authors also suggest that in further research, it would be beneficial to determine who the stakeholders are in this communication process and what their thoughts or recommendations are for the non-profit organization (Vidak, Tobić, & Kovačević, 2023).
While other authors such as Lester and Helmut (1998) and Fumkin (2005) say that non-profit organizations, which collectively comprise the emerging sector, play an ever-increasing role in the economies and societies of nations around the globe.

Vrba (2022, pp. 26-31) suggests and division of activities and functions that are present in the cities all around the World; these activities have connection to the welfare as well as profit and non-for-profit organisations and daily life of inhabits living in these cities.

3. Virtual Organization and Education

There are some research papers covering virtual organizations and education (or knowledge). For instance:

- Research no. 1: The authors Trish and Gavin (2002) put forward the idea that the requirement for technical knowledge and team engagement will differ across various stages of learning. Authors Trish and Gavin (2002) add that by examining the attributes of these stages, the authors provide observations on the emergence of a 'completion phase' in team development. Trish and Gavin (2002) contend that the degree to which teams exhibit different learning stages significantly influences the formation of online learning behavior; and through a discussion of these findings, the authors propose an explanation for why diverse teams develop distinct learning behaviors, with a particular focus on the role of teaching as a means of moderation and coordination, despite prevailing expectations in virtual team pedagogy (Trish, Gavin, 2002).

- Research no. 2: The authors' research encompasses two main components (Baniulis, Tamulynas, Aukstakalnis, 2003): the conceptualization of a virtual learning organization and knowledge testing environments, and the development of a web-services-based knowledge assessment tool called TestTool. In the subsequent phase, an experimental version known as TestTool 1.0 was created, which incorporates a GRID environment based on the Globus toolkit. The use of Globus tools aims to consolidate distributed resources into a unified system, rather than distributing data and tasks to available computing resources. This implementation provides enhanced security and usability for
distributed learning resources; all web services integrated into the TestTool's Grid-aware implementation align with the requirements of the Grid, utilizing specific communication protocols and actualizing concrete interfaces. When a student engages with a test, temporary LO grid services are dynamically created and combined. These services represent the most dynamic aspect of TestTool (Baniulis, Tamulynas, Aukstakalnis, 2003). During test composition, the selection of services is based on the availability of LO services at that time, using the LO registry for selection; all necessary services, as dictated by metadata, can be created on a nearby server with less load; this concept is akin to reusing software components, dynamically creating them at runtime when test execution or course content is required (Baniulis, Tamulynas, Aukstakalnis, 2003). The authors assume that all components have already been created (Baniulis, Tamulynas, Aukstakalnis, 2003).

Virtual education, also known as online learning or e-learning, has gained significant prominence in recent years as a flexible and accessible mode of education (Allen, Seaman, 2017).

It refers to the delivery of educational content and instruction through digital platforms, allowing learners to access materials, participate in discussions, and complete assignments remotely; virtual education has several advantages, including the ability to overcome geographical barriers, enabling individuals from diverse locations to access educational opportunities (Allen, Seaman, 2017). Authors Allen and Seaman (2017) also add that it offers flexibility in terms of scheduling, allowing learners to balance their studies with other commitments and additionally, virtual education often provides interactive and multimedia-rich learning experiences, fostering engagement and enhancing understanding. One study conducted by Allen and Seaman (2017) explored the prevalence and growth of online learning in the United States. The research found that online enrollments were increasing at a faster rate than traditional face-to-face enrollments, indicating the growing popularity and acceptance of virtual education (Allen, Seaman, 2017).
4. Methodology

The methodology used for this quantitative research was a questionnaire survey, which was distributed to non-profit organizations that uses virtual means (such as online chat or similar) in the Czech Republic. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions that aimed to explore various aspects of virtual non-profit organizations, including their structure, communication, and use of technology. The questionnaire was distributed electronically, and responses were collected anonymously in the span of half of year during 2022 and 2023.

5. Research and Research Results

Due to the fact that the questionnaire focuses on virtual non-profit organizations in the Czech Republic, the target audience would consist of individuals and organizations involved in or interested in the operation of virtual non-profit organizations in the Czech Republic. This may include individuals who are volunteers, benefactors, or employees of virtual non-profit organizations, as well as those who are contemplating launching a virtual non-profit. It may also include individuals who have benefited from the services or programs of virtual non-profit organizations.

In conclusion, the results of the survey questionnaire aimed at virtual non-profit organizations in the Czech Republic revealed a number of significant insights. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of respondents reported that their organization had successfully transitioned to a virtual model, with the majority using online communication tools and platforms for collaboration and engagement. Nevertheless, a number of obstacles were reported, including difficulties in maintaining member engagement and recruiting new members.

The majority of respondents reported a need for more financial support and resources. Lack of government support and limited corporate sponsorship opportunities were cited as significant obstacles to financial sustainability. The majority of respondents expressed a desire for additional training and resources in the areas of online communication, fundraising, and organizational administration. Despite the difficulties, respondents expressed a strong commitment to their organizations and a belief in the value of virtual non-profits.
They identified several benefits of a virtual model, such as increased accessibility, flexibility, and the ability to reach a larger audience. The results emphasize the significance of addressing the financial sustainability and training requirements of virtual non-profit organizations in the Czech Republic in order to support the valuable community service work they perform.

6. Recommendations

Based on the research, it is possible to draw the following recommendations:

- Establish a culture of trust, accountability, and collaboration: Successful virtual organizations require effective communication, coordination, and a culture of trust, accountability, and collaboration; leadership and management should nurture and encourage this culture to ensure that all team members are working towards the same objectives.

- Utilize Business Activity Monitoring (BAM) strategies to monitor Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), measure individual performance using role activity records, and evaluate overall efficiency; this will aid in identifying areas for development and ensure the organization is meeting its goals.

- Provide training for virtual team management, which necessitates a distinct set of skills and strategies than traditional management; therefore, it is essential to train supervisors and team leaders in effective strategies for managing virtual teams and this strategy may include communication, team dynamics, and leadership.

- Utilizing new technologies, such as virtual communication tools and cloud-based software, can significantly improve the efficacy and efficiency of virtual organizations; therefore, it is advised to appreciate and implement new technologies that can assist the organization in operating more efficiently.

- Non-profit organizations can use online interventions to increase access to services and reach a larger audience; this can include virtual day centers and programs for harm reduction; interventions must be devised so that they are accessible and hospitable to all members of the target group.
7. Conclusion

In recent years, the emergence and expansion of virtual organizations have significantly altered the operations of enterprises and non-profits. Adoption of new technologies, particularly the internet and digital communication tools, has enabled organizations to operate virtually, without requiring a physical presence at a particular location. This has created new opportunities for non-profit collaboration, fundraising, and advocacy.

Effective monitoring is essential for the productivity of virtual organizations, and variables such as VO models, communication and collaboration tools, team dynamics, leadership, and individual performance have a substantial impact on their productivity. Nonetheless, effective communication, coordination, and a culture of trust, accountability, and collaboration are necessary for their success. Virtual organizations may have access to a broader range of skills and expertise, resulting in increased innovation and productivity, as well as reduced costs.

Virtual interventions, such as the virtual day center, have the potential to increase substance misuse prevention efforts in the non-profit sector.

References


• Sande, M., et. al. (2022). Online interventions and virtual day centres for young people who use drugs – potential for harm reduction. DOI 10.21203/rs.3.rs-2213896/v1.
