

Structures, Norms, and Protocols for Managing Projects across Boundaries

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Abstract

Collaborating through technology requires more than just individual team member mastery of available technological tools. It also requires effective structures for organizing the work, and a set of shared expectations about how to communicate and manage work tasks. The purpose of this presentation is to share with participants a variety of appropriate work design structures, and communication behavior and project/task management norms and protocols to assist participants in working and conducting research with dispersed team members. To begin, several possible structures for organizing work are reviewed. For example, one of these is a hierarchical structure in which a single PI solicits feedback from the lead researcher at each of the institutions involved. Another structure is a specialist model, in which the PI solicits input from specialist groups at appropriate stages of the project. Second, specific norms and protocols for guiding the communication behavior of research teams will be shared, including: availability and acknowledgment of norms, protocols for usage of specific communication tools, rules governing subgroup information exchange, and maintaining a balance of structured and unstructured communication. Third, norms and protocols to assist team members with project and task management will be shared, including: developing a project lifecycle map, distinguishing between routine and creative tasks, assigning roles and responsibilities, timeframes and accountability measures, protocols for shared workspaces and files, and norms for project review, revision, and final approval.