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Team to market: An emerging
approach for creating dream teams
for the post-pandemic world

FENG LI | CLARE AVERY

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DEAR READER,

Welcome to edition 52 of the Capco Institute Journal of Financial Transformation.

Transformation has been a constant theme in our industry for several decades, but the events of 2020 have accelerated change in employee working patterns, and in the very nature of the workplace itself. This Journal examines three key elements of these new working paradigms – leadership, workforce, and organization.

As we explore in this edition, a key part of any firm's transformation agenda centres around digital leadership and how to tackle the novel challenges created by changes within organizations and society. Leaders need advanced organizational skills to build teams that use digital technologies, as well as to inspire millennial workers who have grown up in a digitally transformed world. They also need deeper technology skills to lead, and a broader understanding of the ethical paradigms introduced by the challenges created through new technologies such as AI. These enhanced skillsets will help today's leaders and their teams fully realize the benefits of new working models.

The topics reviewed in this Journal offer flexibility for employees, increased agility for teams, and a combination of both for organizations. When supported by the right technology, these can create collaborative, outcome-driven environments. Through the resulting remote or hybrid models, organizations can transform their workforce and operations to boost productivity, cost effectiveness and employee engagement, while enhancing resilience and customer experiences.

As always, our contributors to this Capco Journal are distinguished, world-class thinkers. I am confident that you will find the quality of thinking in this latest edition to be a valuable source of information and strategic insight.

Thank you to all our contributors and thank you for reading.

Lance Levy, **Capco CEO**

TEAM TO MARKET: AN EMERGING APPROACH FOR CREATING DREAM TEAMS FOR THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD[1]

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ABSTRACT

Teams are the fundamental building blocks of modern organizations, but despite over 50 years of research and practice most organizations are still notoriously inconsistent in creating high performance teams. Traditional checklist approaches have not worked, because successful teams often display contrasting features in member composition, power structures, decision making processes, and resource levels. Teams with identical characteristics frequently deliver vastly different results. Based on recent empirical evidence from 25 leading organizations across seven countries, this paper advances the notion of "team to market" (T2M), an emerging approach that can significantly increase the chances of organizations creating "dream teams" through an outcome-driven culture, an experimental approach, and a greater level of diversity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teams are the fundamental building blocks of modern organizations. Longitudinal surveys of Fortune 1000 firms have shown a steady increase in the use of team-based structures, which have grown from less than 20 percent in 1980 to 50 percent in 1990, to over 80 percent in 2000 [Garvey (2002)]; and by 2010 nearly all organizations had adopted formal team structures [Bernstein (2014), Bernstein et al. (2019)]. On average, the amount of time people spend in collaborative activities exceeds 50 percent, and in many organizations more than three-quarters of an employee's day is spent on communicating with colleagues [Cross et al. (2016)]. A successful team can deliver results far outperforming a collection of even the most talented individuals. Business success today depends not on how people work but how effectively they work together. Creating and nurturing high performance teams has become a significant source of competitive advantage.

With the rapid proliferation of digital tools – such as Microsoft Teams, Slack, Google Meet, and Zoom – to support remote working and collaboration across time, space, and organizational boundaries, teams are becoming increasingly more dispersed, dynamic, diverse, and digital. Virtual teams allow organizations to create, and recreate, business values and satisfy the growing expectations employees have for flexibility and work-life balance. Such teams have played a critical role in enabling numerous organizations to maintain business continuity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, despite over 50 years of research and practice, most organizations are still notoriously inconsistent in creating high performance teams. There is no shortage of advice and guidelines about how to create the dream team, however, traditional checklist approaches, taught in business schools, practiced by consultants, and touted by the media, have not worked. Successful teams often display contrasting features

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in terms of member composition, power structures, decision making processes, and resource levels; similar teams often deliver vastly different results. Following a checklist to create teams with certain desirable characteristics offers no guarantee for success.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many organizations to adopt full-time remote working, turning countless teams into virtual teams within a very short period of time. Some emergency measures adopted during the crisis are likely to become permanent fixtures in modern life. This has created significant new challenges for managing team cohesion, time-zone difference, cultural diversity, and technological support [Raghuram et al. (2019)]. Previous studies have shown that "always-on" connections can exhaust employees, sap productivity, hamper creativity, and deprive members of uninterrupted time for cognitively demanding tasks [Cross et al. (2016)]. As we slowly come out of the pandemic, leadership focus is increasingly shifting from making ad hoc responses to the pandemic to laying the groundwork for success in the post-pandemic world. Since an organization's ability to create and sustain high performance teams has become an important source of competitive advantage, what could business leaders do to improve the likelihood and consistency of team success?

2. WHAT DO WE ALREADY KNOW ABOUT (VIRTUAL) TEAM WORKING?

We already know a great deal about teams and virtual teams. A search on "Web of science (1970-2020)", the academic portal for comprehensive citation data from different academic disciplines, returned 245,481 papers with the keyword "team" or "teams" in the subject. Many new papers have been published each year, exceeding 20,000 per annum since 2017. A similar search on Google Scholars returned 6,030,000 items.

Management researchers have studied the structural features (e.g., task scope, complexity and structure, technology, and virtuality), compositional features (e.g., member ability, diversity, and churn), and mediating mechanisms (e.g., motivation, conflict, trust, creativity, cohesion, and decision making) of teams and their effect on team performance, but no consistent patterns of what features make a team successful have been identified.

Psychologists and sociologists examined the effect of group norms and team dynamics on performance, but, once again, contrasting features – such as consensus-based decision making versus teams that encourage vigorous arguments

amongst members – have been found in equally successful teams. The norms of one successful team often diverge sharply from those of other teams.

Leading businesses have also studied dream teams. Google, for example, conducted an extensive study of over 180 teams but failed to identify any consistent features for team success [Rozovsky (2015)]. Team composition made no difference to performance and the norms of one successful team often contrasted sharply with another equally successful team. The study did find, however, that successful teams shared five essential team dynamics linked to psychological safety, dependability, structure and clarity, meaning of work, and impact of work. However, addressing these issues, singularly or collectively, offers no guarantee for team success.

Despite all the effort made over the last 50 years, the "secret recipe" for creating the dream team consistently remains elusive. New approaches are needed urgently.

2.1 "Hunting for treasure"

Despite the difficulties and challenges in creating high performance teams, such teams have been observed in organizations of all sizes and sectors from all over the world – from Australia, France, and the U.S., to the U.K., New Zealand, Japan, and China. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is particularly fitting to revisit the story of Taobao, the eCommerce platform owned by Alibaba.

In early 2003, China was besieged by the deadly SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak, where schools were suspended, social activities curtailed, and many public places closed. On 7th of April 2003, Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, called eight employees to his apartment for a secret meeting. He asked them to resign from Alibaba and sign a confidentiality agreement in order to participate in a secret new project. The agreement was written in English, so nobody could understand the terms nor had time to read it, but they all signed it out of trust for Jack Ma.

The project was to develop and launch a C2C e-commerce web portal as quickly as possible. The team included three developers, three operations specialists, one user-experience designer, one accountant, plus Jack Ma and his PA. They camped (literally) in Jack Ma's apartment for the duration of the project, and one month later, on 10th May 2003, Taobao – which means "hunting for treasure" in Chinese – went live. During the SARS outbreak, people were discouraged from going to public places, which created a rare opportunity for e-commerce to flourish in China.

Just before the secret meeting, eBay entered China aggressively in March 2003 by acquiring the leading local player EachNet, which controlled over 80 percent of the C2C market share in China. This move was viewed as an existential threat by Alibaba and it prompted Jack Ma to initiate his secret project. At that time, "eBay was the biggest e-commerce company in the world and a darling of both Silicon Valley and Wall Street. Alibaba's online marketplace was derided as another Chinese copycat with no right to be in the same room as the big dogs of Silicon Valley" [Lee (2018)]. However, by March 2006, Taobao had already significantly outpaced eBay, capturing 67 percent of China's C2C market against eBay EachNet's dwindling 29 percent. On 20th of December 2006, the mighty eBay threw in the towel and admitted defeat. Taobao went on to dominate e-Commerce in China and the rest is history [Li (2018, 2019)].

The question is, how could a team of eight, with modest qualifications and experience, camped in an apartment in a second-tier city in China, with limited resources and blind trust in Jack Ma's vision, have single-mindedly developed and launched Taobao in just over a month, defeated the mighty eBay in three years, and proceeded to dominate the largest e-Commerce market in the world?

3. TEAM TO MARKET (T2M)

The story of Taobao, as improbable as it may sound, is not an isolated case. Many iconic global companies – from Apple, Amazon, and Google, to HP, Dell, Virgin, and Disney – were started by small founding teams in garages [ScoopWhoop (2016)]. Their remarkable successes have given rise to a significant new management concept – "team to market", or T2M.

In France, the concept is already being acted on: the three "technology transfer accelerator offices" (SATTs) in the Grand Est Region are proactively hiring experienced teams of CEOs and business development managers to work with "inventor-researchers" with scientific intellectual properties in order to launch and scale up deep-tech-based startups.[2]

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated the uptake of T2M as an emerging approach for team creation. Instead of following a traditional checklist approach to create teams with particular features assumed to be desirable, T2M encapsulates the willingness of senior leaders to set broad parameters for their teams and then empower those teams to perform freely within those parameters. These may include

autonomy to recruit and retire members, establish rules and protocols, resolve conflicts and synchronize energy, deploy technologies, manage resources, and recalibrate team strategies and objectives in response to changing internal or external demands. Each team often displays unique – and diverse – characteristics even within the same organization, but our research has shown that such result-driven teams are far more likely to deliver exceptional performance than following the traditional checklist approaches [Li (2020a)].

Team to market should be distinguished from another popular concept – "time to market" (TtM), which refers to the length of time it takes from a product being conceived until it is available for sale. Time to market is important in industries where products are outmoded quickly or for first-of-a-kind products. However, by treating time as the "north star metric" to drive performance, other important metrics, such as quality, cost, and customer experience, are often overlooked or compromised. After all, time is just an arbitrary measure that needs to be balanced with other metrics. In contrast, "team to market" empowers the team to balance multiple metrics (of which time may be one) holistically based on changing circumstances and emerging intelligence to maximize results and business impact.

Team to market is not limited to the founding teams of iconic companies or successful new product teams. Other internal and external facing teams that deliver exceptional performance in customer service, production and distribution, sales and marketing, R&D, strategy and planning, and administrative support are also included. Such teams have inspired Hollywood movies, where underdogs defeat much stronger opponents against all odds, armed only with near spiritual aspiration, unshakable trust in one another, extreme hard work, and unwavering determination to succeed. Workplace collaboration technologies – from Zoom, Slack to Google Meet and Microsoft Teams – have made successes like these more accessible to teams of all sizes and sectors in a wide variety of digital and physical settings.

Different from traditional checklist approaches where teams are expected to adopt certain desirable features, team to market encourages a team to evolve over different stages of a project or product development, rather than adhering to preconceived features and styles. For example, during product or project conception, the team may encourage vigorous debates among members to stimulate idea generation and foster creativity, which call for fluid structures and collective

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[2] https://www.team-to-market.fr/

decision making. However, as a project or product development evolves to execution, other performance measures such as efficiency, compliance, and discipline become important, so a clear hierarchy and centralized decision making may become more appropriate. As a senior business leader remarked: "Some teams had a bunch of smart people who figured out how to break up work evenly. Other groups had pretty average members, but they came up with ways to take advantage of everyone's relative strengths. Some groups had one strong leader. Others were more fluid and everyone took a leadership role." By allowing "a thousand flowers to bloom", the odds of creating dream teams in an organization can be significantly increased.

Successes like these are still rare, but they have happened frequently enough to be more than the result of pure luck. Starling Bank, for example, only received its banking license in July 2016 and it has been growing at an incredible rate. It was able to build its IT system from the ground up and launch the U.K.'s first app-only current account in March 2017. The challenger bank embraced channel-based communications across the whole bank from day one, integrated with a full suite of custom business processes and third-party software, which created a level of agility both within and amongst its teams that incumbent banks find hard to emulate. In particular, the collaboration technologies it adopted enabled the technical and customer service teams in the bank to respond to system or customer incidents quickly and effectively.

In team sports, the English football (soccer) team Leicester City FC became the champion of the most competitive football league in the world, the English Premier League, against all odds in 2016. It beat legendary English football clubs with glorious histories, deep pockets, accomplished players, celebrity managers, and steadfast loyal fans. Similar stories have been told in basketball in the U.S. [e.g., Cleveland Cavaliers in 2016 and Dallas Mavericks in 2013; Davis (2019)] and rugby in Australia [e.g., Wests Tigers in 2005 and Penrith Panthers in 2003; Evans (2016)]. Their successes have been the subject of management research and inspired business leaders and entrepreneurs all over the world.

Outside sports, high performance teams have been observed in many less glamorous, everyday settings. These teams often appear ordinary, but somehow, they manage to deliver extraordinary product or service and exceptional performance. What is the "secret recipe" for their success?

4. TEAMS AND TEAMWORK

Teams can be defined as small groups of interdependent individuals who share a common mission, goal, or responsibility for outcomes. They refer to two or more individuals who interact socially, either face-to-face or via digital communications across space, time, or organizational boundaries. A team shares one or more common goals and is brought together to perform tasks relevant to their organizations. Team members exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflows, goals, and outcomes, have different roles and responsibilities, and are embedded in an organizational system with boundaries and linkages to the wider work environment.

There are many different types of teams and they vary significantly in skill differentiation, authority distribution, and temporal stability. Other dimensions, such as team size, market orientation (internal or external facing), organizational seniority (top management teams versus operational teams), and geographical proximity (co-located or dispersed), have also been identified.

One of the earliest studies was the Hawthorne Experiment by Elton Mayo, between 1927-1932, at the Western Electric Company's Chicago Plant on how working conditions affected the productivity of workers. The study concluded that workers were motivated more by psychological than physical working conditions. Working relationships and social interactions, such as teamwork and recognition, rather than physical working conditions, had the greatest effect on productivity.

Over the last 50 years, numerous academic studies have examined what makes some teams successful while others fail. The advent of information and communications technologies (ICTs) has facilitated the rapid proliferation of virtual teams, which have created new challenges and opportunities for workers and organizations. Despite the vast literature, however, consensus remains remarkably lacking in our understanding of what makes a team successful.

As mentioned earlier, while previous studies have examined the structural features (e.g., task scope, complexity and structure, technology, and virtuality), compositional features (e.g., member ability, diversity, and churn), and mediating mechanisms (e.g., motivation, conflict, trust, creativity, cohesion, and decision making) of teams and teamwork and their effect on team performance, no consistent patterns

have been identified. While some successful teams embody features such as members as friends who socialize outside work, other equally successful teams are composed of members with no social contact beyond work. Some successful teams have strong leaders and clear structures, but others are more autonomous with fluid, informal, flatter, and less hierarchical structures. There are even teams with nearly identical constituents and overlapping members but materially different performance.

Psychologists and sociologists examined the effect of group norms and team dynamics on team performance, but once again, contrasting features – such as consensus-based decision making versus teams that encourages vigorous arguments amongst members – have been found in equally successful teams. The norms of one successful team often contrast sharply with those of another. Some studies found that what distinguished good teams from dysfunctional ones was how team members treated one another, but others found that a healthy level of competitive tension within teams was effective in bringing out the best in each member.

Leading businesses have also studied high performance teams. For example, in 2012, Google embarked on an extensive study of team effectiveness – code named "Project Aristotle". They reviewed previous studies, gathered data on 180 Google teams, conducted over 200 interviews, and analyzed over 250 team attributes. Surprisingly, they also failed to identify any consistent pattern in the key characteristics of a dream team. The composition of a team made no difference to performance. The norms of one effective team often contrasted sharply with another equally successful team. However, the study found that the "unwritten rules" or the "team culture", which govern how people interact, structure their work, and view their contributions are key to team performance, and successful teams often share five essential team dynamics [Rozovsky (2015)]:

- **Psychological safety:** can we take risks without feeling insecure or embarrassed?

- **Dependability:** can we count on each other to do high quality work on time?

- **Structure and clarity:** are goals, roles, and execution plans in our team clear?

- **Meaning of work:** are we working on something that is personally important for each of us?

- **Impact of work:** do we fundamentally believe that the work we are doing matters?

The study concluded that what distinguishes a good team from a dysfunctional one is how teammates treat and respect one another. Team chemistry and cohesiveness are more critical factors than even talent or resource for team success. Successful teams often display structures and processes that support clarity and dependability, team dynamics that create psychological safety, and work that is meaningful both to team members and at higher levels. However, while successful teams often display some or even all of these features, they offer no guarantee of team success.

Furthermore, most available studies of teams and teamwork are based on the experience of teams supported by "traditional" workplace collaboration technologies such as emails, video conferencing, and other disparate, proprietary software. Systematic research on how emerging collaborative technologies – such as channel or thread-based communications and emerging collaboration platforms that enable the seamless integration of apps, bots, business processes, and third-party software – affect teams and team performance is still largely absent.

Our research has found that high performance teams require not only effective interpersonal communication but also an ability to leverage all of their existing specialist software with ease and simplicity. The complexity and variety of this software is growing rapidly, with many enterprises today using well over 1,000 different software tools. By integrating existing software tools within a coherent collaboration platform, teams may be able to save time and share knowledge effectively, which would otherwise be isolated within separate applications.

For the greatest efficiency gains, these integrations need to be intuitive and accessible to all users, including those who do not have a deep technical knowledge of coding and programming skills. In doing so, some emerging workplace collaboration technologies are poised to evolve into a new digital working environment that can potentially supersede the proprietary digital platforms that have dominated the workplace for decades to fundamentally transform the way people work, creating sustainable competitive advantages for their organizations.

5. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND VIRTUAL TEAMS

Today, nearly all teams – including those primarily co-located teams – are supported by a growing range of digital technologies. Virtual work has become the current reality, with people working flexibly from dispersed locations, often involved

in multiple teams, interacting using digital communications. Many businesses are now being run very effectively from their employees' homes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This phenomenon is not new and it has been studied from different perspectives across the world, from telecommuting and teleworking in the 1970s and 1980s, virtual teams and computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW) in the 1990s and early 2000s, to more recently, how a new generation of workplace collaboration technologies can be used to transform teams and teamwork [Raghuram et al. (2019)].

Despite over half a century's research, practice, and policy initiatives, the projected disappearance of traditional offices in city centers has failed to materialize — although 2020 might prove to be the tipping point. During the first oil crisis in 1973, Jack Nils famously advocated telecommuting for office workers. Instead of traveling to offices for work, work can be electronically transmitted to the workers. This concept soon evolved into teleworking, where information resources can be accessed remotely via computers and telecommunications. However, after numerous experiments and repeated failures, it is increasingly recognized that work is not just what you do, but also where you go and who you go with, which gives rise to the notion of team-teleworking and virtual teams [Li (1995)]. Since then, management focus has increasingly shifted from teleworking to using ICTs to support geographically distributed teams working together.

Until the COVID-19 pandemic, full-time remote working remained relatively rare, and only around 5 percent of American workers were full-time remote workers, although 43 percent spent at least some time working remotely [Buffer (2018, 2019)]. Historically, France trailed other OECD countries in telework, but since it was written into French law in 2005, attitudes have changed, and the sweeping overhaul of labor rules in 2017 made the introduction of telework more commonplace. According to a recent study,[3] 29 percent of French employees worked remotely in 2018, up from 25 percent in 2017. By 2019, France already had one of the most flexible working cultures in the world, according to the IWG's 2019 Global Workplace Survey,[4] with 60 peercent of businesses in France offering flexible working policies for employees. In Australia, 68 percent of employers allowed remote working but attitudes are sharply divided, according to research by Indeed (2019). However, the pandemic has forced many organizations to adopt full time remote working to maintain business continuity. Indeed, many businesses are now operating almost entirely from the homes of their employees. Working from home, as recently announced by J.P Morgan and Schroders in the U.K., and numerous other businesses from Silicon Valley, Paris, to Beijing, is being encouraged in the post-pandemic world.

Within virtual teams, members use digital tools to varying degrees to work across spatial, temporal, and organizational boundaries when accomplishing interdependent tasks. Compared with traditional co-located teams, virtual teams face additional challenges associated with geographic separation, time zone differences, cultural diversity, and organizational membership. However, the benefits of virtual teams — both to employers and employees — are also increasingly recognized.

Over the years, numerous workplace collaboration tools have been developed to support both virtual and co-located teams with most teams using stand-alone tools with single or limited functionalities to support meetings or information sharing. More recently, a new generation of integrated collaboration tools with bundled services have emerged, some of which allow the seamless integration of business processes and third-party software. Below is a list of popular tools:

- **Meeting and video conferencing:** Zoom, Skype, GoToMeeting, Google Hangouts

- **Collaboration:** Slack, Microsoft Teams, Cisco Spark, Facebook Workplace, Google Hangouts

- **Messaging and chat:** Slack, Twist, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, Glip, Flock

- **Document storage and file sharing:** Dropbox, Google Drive, Sharepoint, One Drive

- **Document co-creation:** Scribblar, Google Docs

- **Project management:** Trello, Jira, Asana, Microsoft Project, Basecamp, Wrike, Apollo

- **Social networking:** Yammer, Jive

- **Scheduling:** Doodle, Calendly

- **Workflow automation:** Zapier, Microsoft Flow, Monday

- **Shared CRM:** GreenRope, HubSpot CRM, Bitrix24

- **Screen sharing and interactive displays**

- **Immersive technologies**, particularly 3D, VR, or AR supported virtual environment

- **Other emerging tools and technologies**, such as bots, tracking tools, and people analytics

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Such tools have enabled virtual teams to improve productivity and accomplish tasks in ways that would have been difficult in the past. As highlighted by some business leaders we interviewed: "Today's knowledge workers expect these tools to be as quick and easy to use as the apps on their mobile devices, highly integrated with other business processes, closely aligned with their work styles, reliable and secure, and easy to set up and use" [CTO of global media firm]. "We bought ourselves a huge head start using some great collaborative software off the shelf, including Slack, Zoom, Airtable and Zapier. With these tools we could do things in an hour that would perhaps take people a month 10 years ago ... We are starting to replace some of them with internally built tools now that we know exactly what we need and need it to scale, but getting up off the ground was much easier for us than for founders in the past" [founder of a unicorn in the U.S.]

Although technology providers are expected to offer tools that enable as much connectivity and transparency as possible, more transparent environments are not always better and privacy is just as essential for performance [Bernstein (2014), Bernstein et al. (2019)]. If unchecked, "always-on" connectivity – when compared to intermittent collaboration interspersed by protected periods of independent work offline – can reduce rather than increase team creativity and performance. For cognitively demanding tasks, scheduled meetings and online collaborations need to be punctuated with solitary work time by creating coordinated "unplugged" time necessary for focused work. There is an enormous and largely unmet, or unrecognized, demand for effective ways to coordinate and align people, a gap some emerging collaboration tools are aiming to fill. Today, email remains the default coordinating point for business communications supporting enormous information flows, but each person has only a partial view, and the rich history held in email systems – the decisions made, questions answered, and information shared – are only partially accessible. If the emails are in the "wrong inbox", or if you are new to an organization, you will have no access to them. Some emerging collaboration technologies using channel or thread-based communications are built to overcome such traditional constraints to significantly increase transparency and alignment, and make the shared history and organizational knowledge equally accessible to everyone regardless of when they join the project.

To mitigate the "transparency and always-on trap", some organizations have even considered abandoning real-time collaborations and explored asynchronous ways of working, but this approach has been criticized as "throwing the baby out with bathwater". Some real-time workplace collaboration tools allow highly personalized control of how these tools are used to mitigate potential problems while enabling new ways of collaboration that are not feasible via traditional collaborative technologies.

The rapid proliferation of workplace collaboration technologies is fundamentally transforming the way teams work, enabling teams to take their products or services to internal and external markets with ease and in ways that were not feasible only a few years ago. This is clearly reflected in the live coverage of FIFA 2018 Football World Cup by Fox's production team. The team consisted of 35 people spread across multiple sites in Russia as well as in Los Angeles, New York City, and Charlotte, North Carolina. In the past, individual producers and teams would have had their favorite workflow and messaging tools and most of the editorial process would be conducted over emails. Teams would not be able to get immediate feedback on assets before broadcasting live or posting on social media. Shared resource teams who worked with multiple programs or departments would have to keep track of a dozen different apps on their phones and their computers. Emails also made it difficult to distinguish between those that required immediate attention and those that were less urgent.

To ensure the seamless live coverage of FIFA 2018, Fox adopted channel-based communications integrated with a large number of workflows and third-party software among its ever-growing pool of productivity and communication applications. These tools enabled the team to collaborate in real time in front of a live audience of millions, from producers to designers to on-screen talent, of whom few were in the same location. They also allowed team members to stay up to date and coordinate coverage as easily as if they were in the same location, enabling them to make rapid decisions about how to make the most of their real-time coverage. These tools also allow freelancers to search for information they needed and get up to speed with the work already done. According to John Herbert, CTO of Fox: "Our video editors, social media managers and producers are creating content by collaborating with each other in real time on Slack, which helps us fulfil our goals of breaking down internal silos while still giving each group a level of control and privacy when needed" [Fox CTO John Herbert].

A further example can be found in Xero from Wellington, New Zealand, a worldwide leader in cloud-based accounting software with over two million subscribers from 180 countries. The company was ranked by Forbes as "the world's most innovative growth company" in 2014 and 2015. In late 2017, Xero rolled out a cohesive communication system across all

business units, using channel-based communications on Slack to replace or integrate a myriad of other messaging and collaboration tools and third-party software used by different business units. By using one universal platform for collaboration and conversation, integrated with a wide range of business processes and third-party software, the customer experience teams, platform services, and product teams were able to communicate easily across its offices in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, the U.K., and the U.S., effectively overcoming barriers arising from distance and time zones when addressing internal incidents and customer issues. Levi Allan, GM Product of Xero, states that: "It has enabled faster and more transparent information sharing across our teams, improving employee engagement and ultimately making it easier to build beautiful products." Matt Simpson, Lead Workfow Coordinator of Xero, adds: "I've got the peace of mind that there's been someone online and that people were going to the right person at the right time."

6. TEAMS TO MARKETS

The notion of "team to market" is not limited to one single team executing a task or fulfilling a responsibility to internal or external customers. People are increasingly involved in multiple teams, and emerging workplace collaboration technologies enable the fulfillment of rapidly changing demands using highly fluid team structures where members join and leave teams as required, old teams dissolved, and new teams formed as demands change. These tools also enable effective collaboration between teams and the efficient handover of a project from one team to another at different stages of the product lifecycle. Importantly, some new collaboration platforms allow the seamless integration with external contractors and partners and shared channels between organizations. The notion of "team to market" is increasingly extended to "teams to markets", as multiple teams evolve and collaborate to satisfy changing demands in internal or external markets, or over different stages of the life cycle of a product or project.

gTech is a support and operations organization within Google, where users and products divisions work together to ensure users and partners get the best service and outputs from Google. Traditionally, gTech was organized around individual products but whenever product strategies shifted (which happens frequently at Google), old teams were disbanded and reformulated into new teams around new products. This model proved to be inflexible as new teams often lacked the right mix of technical and operational skills, and integrating new team members can slow progress. It also offered limited

development opportunities for career mobility and knowledge sharing. gTech tried hiring buffer capacity to meet fluctuating demand, but it was too expensive. It also experimented with a rotation program, which proved too rigid.

The solution was to develop a new marketplace approach, which asked employees and managers to "bid" for new assignments. Code named "Project Chameleon", gTech deployed an algorithm to match employees to roles based on their preferences and those of the managers. This project not only improved business prioritization, transparency, agility, and choice, but also significantly increased staff mobility and facilitated networking. The system enabled gTech to deploy a scalable and dynamic staffing model to support frequent strategy shift and employee development. People joined and left teams, and old teams dissolved and new teams formed fluidly as demand changed, giving employees and managers increased choice while significantly improving productivity. This transformation not only enhanced the effective functioning of individual teams in fulfilling their responsibilities, but also enabled different teams to evolve organically in response to rapidly changing internal or external demands.

Similarly, a large residential property business in Asia found providing services to residents was costly for the business and often prompted low levels of customer satisfaction. For large residential properties, the company historically maintained its own service teams on site (comprised of plumbers, electricians, joiners, cleaners, handyman, and child minders) to ensure high quality and prompt services. However, due to fluctuating demands, some service teams often had little to do for long periods, punctuated by sudden high demand, which they could not satisfy in a timely fashion.

An enterprising team leader experimented with an online marketplace based on an instant messaging platform, where new jobs from residents were displayed in real time for service providers to bid on. The system was based on real time communications between the customer, service provider, team leader, and property management staff, keeping all relevant parties informed of progress. Each service team was free to organize its own shifts. The marketplace was so successful that it was soon opened to residents from properties in adjacent areas. Vetted external service providers, alongside the company's own service teams, competed for new jobs. The new system not only allowed the company to turn a loss-making division into a profitable business, but also offered different teams of service staff more flexibility and higher income through a fluid team structure responsive to fluctuating demands. Customer satisfaction soared. This would

not have been possible without the marketplace to match supply with demand in real time and the messaging system that enabled synchronous communications. This scheme has since been rolled out to all managed properties in the group. It also enabled service teams to serve external customers when internal demands are low, and external contractors and partners to bid for jobs during peak demands.

"Teams to markets" is also reflected in the experience of Electronic Arts (EA) during the development and launch of its FIFA19 game, which sold a staggering 260 million copies, the highest volume ever for a video game. The game was the result of a major project involving 600 people in 78 teams and 32 locations, which included external contractors and partners from around the world. These teams used channel-based communications on Slack, integrated with a full suite of business processes and third-party software both for collaboration within each team and the coordination and handover of the project amongst teams during different stages of product development, launch, and after-sale services.

During product development, the design team interacted extensively with the core game engine development team. When launch approached, publishing, analytics, and player development teams were also involved. After launch, the technology operations team and game design team worked together to respond to the rapid increases in user numbers. Crucial for these teams to work together easily to take their respective products or services to internal and external markets around the world were channel-based communications, together with the seamless integration with over 550 third-party applications and workflows within EA. The collaboration platform allowed these teams from different functions and locations, together with external contractors and partners, to carry out the required tasks and hand over the project from one team to another over different stages of product development and launch with confidence.

7. TEAM STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Since the 1980s, bureaucracy has been under relentless attack for fostering rigid hierarchy and slow decision making. New forms of organizations that promote flatter and more flexible structures, decentralization, and self-management have been advocated. Teams are widely regarded as substituting a peer-based control of work for hierarchical control and coordination [Child (2019)]. Management guru Gary Hamel even called for "the end of bureaucracy", citing the example of Haier,

the world's largest appliance maker with annual revenue of U.S.$35 bln and 75,000 employees worldwide. Haier divided itself into more than 4,000 microenterprises – or teams, most of which have 10 to 15 employees with decisions made within these small autonomous teams. Other examples, from Zappos and Medium to Valve and Blinkist, have been used to illustrate new organizational forms that promote self-management and team-based structures, such as holacracy or modularity, where decision making power is conferred to fluid teams, circles, and roles rather than individuals.

New forms of organizations are also emerging along the temporal dimension. For example, flash organizations [Valentine et al. (2017)] allow complex work to be completed via crowdsourcing, by structuring the crowd as organizations. This has been described as the pop-up employer, which builds the team, does the job, and then dissolves the team and says goodbye [Scheiber (2017)]. It uses ephemeral setups to execute a single, complex project in ways traditionally associated with corporations, non-profit groups, or governments.

Keeping bureaucracy at bay is a never-ending struggle, and two categories of solutions have been advanced. The first is "internal market mechanisms", which allows users to decide whether bureaucratic procedures are excessive by putting a "price" on the contributions. The second solution is the "community building approach", which emphasizes strong values and culture, encouraging employees to rise above their formal job descriptions to contribute their discretionary effort propelled by a feeling of belonging and higher purpose.

However, it has also been found that non-hierarchical organizational forms can cause confusion and complication in hiring, compensation, career progression, and in carrying out work, and most of them do not scale easily. Many organizations that enthusiastically adopted such structures have since reverted to hierarchies, albeit with more flexibility, fewer layers, and more decentralized decision making. Today, hierarchy remains the most widely used organizational form for nearly all organizations around the world. Despite the many criticisms it received, hierarchy offers clarity and simplicity, which is particularly effective for virtual teams when members are often in different locations, time zones, and cultures. The limitations of flexible, fluid, non-hierarchical team structures are increasingly recognized. For example, Blinkist abandoned its experiment with radical management after it found that being governed by a rulebook was as onerous as being ruled by a controlling boss and according to its co-founder Niklas

Jansen, "[i]nstead of solving problems, we were spending all our time asking how we solve them Holacratically?"

A recent study found that the clear management structure offered by hierarchies can help firms hire and keep their best people, and more structured managerial practices have a strong correlation with higher productivity in firms [Cornwell et al. (2019)]. For most teams, hierarchy offers the clarity of roles, structures, and decision processes that are essential for team success; and the desire to go to extreme forms of organizing is increasingly resisted. From the perspective of employees, "boss-less business is no workers' paradise" despite the potential benefits, such as greater autonomy and flexibility [Clegg (2019)]. Teams need leaders, and even in self-managing teams with fluid structures, natural leaders and informal pecking orders nearly always emerge over time.

In 1999, Gallup published a mammoth study based on interviews with over 80,000 managers from organizations of all sizes in different industries [Buckingham and Coffman (1999)]. The study explored what great managers do differently from ordinary managers to coax world class performance from their workers, and key issues have been further examined in a series of follow up studies both by Gallup and others. These studies found that great managers balance the priorities and expectations of individual talents with the goals of teams and strategies of organizations. Having great team leaders is not only essential for superior team performance, but also for recruiting, nurturing, and retaining talents. In fact, it has been found that between 60-75 percent of the reasons that people give for quitting an organization refer to their immediate managers. When a team is failing to perform, perhaps the first step should be to review or replace the team leader.

The rapid proliferation of team-based structures is the result of the broader digital transformation of work that is currently taking place. In traditional job design, organizations create fixed, stable roles and then add supervisory and management positions on top. When parts of these jobs are automated or digitized, the work that remains for humans is generally more interpretive and service-oriented, involving problem-solving, data interpretation, communications and listening, customer service and empathy, and teamwork and collaboration. These higher-level skills are not fixed tasks like traditional jobs, so they are forcing organizations to create more flexible positions and roles, supported by team-based structures and rich and flexible collaboration technologies.

8. CONCLUSION: LEADING HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

"Team to market" is part of a seismic shift in the digital transformation of work and everyday life. On the one hand, the nature of our economy has changed radically, and the success of any organization depends on the productive use of the most valuable resource of our time – information. On the other hand, we have increasingly more powerful digital technologies at our disposal that are ubiquitous, affordable, customizable, and easy to use, which empower each of us to capture, share, and use information in ways we could not have even imagined in the past. This powerful combination has been driving the digital transformation of strategy and organization across different sectors and domains [Li (2020b)]. As the fundamental building block of modern organizations, teams must evolve as an integral part of such a seismic shift in order to meet rapidly changing internal and external demands. "Team to market" allows business leaders and knowledge workers to consider and create effective teams in ways that might have been inconceivable only a few months ago, by taking advantage of the significant new capabilities afforded by a new generation of workplace collaboration technologies.

> **"Team to market" is part of a seismic shift in the digital transformation of work and everyday life.**

Different from traditional checklist approaches for team creation, "team to market" encourages an outcome-driven culture via empowered teams. The leadership responsibility is to set broad parameters around common purposes, team objectives, resource levels, and expectations, and then allow the team to create and experiment with its own structures, rules, and protocols for decision making, team technologies, and channels of communications. The styles and features that each team develops often differ from one another, but all teams are authorized to evolve and recalibrate according to changing internal or external circumstances within the broad

parameters set for them and the overall direction for the wider organization. New collaboration technologies enable teams to form and evolve with greater fluidity and experiment with new ways of working frequently and inexpensively.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many services – from education and administration, banking, journalism, and government, to yoga and gym classes, concerts, and medical consultations – to replace face-to-face meetings by video conferencing. The scale of the shift towards virtual teams is unprecedented and will alter the way people think about work and how they live and work for many years to come. Our collective jump from physical to virtual is not limited to business activities, as families and friends have also been forced to learn the techniques of remote communications enmasse. This will significantly improve the general levels of digital literacy in society.

When the pandemic is over, many people are likely to continue to work flexibly from dispersed locations across multiple teams, both out of necessity and as a lifestyle choice. Some leading businesses – from tech firms in Silicon Valley and Beijing to banks in London and Paris – have already announced policies to allow employees to work from home permanently. Our experience during the pandemic has demonstrated that workplace collaboration technologies allow teams to form, evolve, and dissolve with far greater fluidity than we had imagined, while communication patterns, cognitive load, and bottlenecks are effectively managed through a suite of technological tools. Management ethos and expectations are also changing to accommodate the new reality of full-time home working. This experience will help overcome long standing resistance to the introduction of digitally-enabled new work practices in the future.

Furthermore, as has been shown during the pandemic, many traditional constraints for virtual teams, such as time zone differences, cultural diversity, and geographical separation, are not just barriers to overcome, but also new resources to exploit for creativity and competitive advantage. As Xero, the cloud-based accounting firm from New Zealand, has shown, customer service team members located in different time zones around the world can take turns to support global customers around the clock. A British engineering firm has significantly shortened design lead-time when work-in-progress is passed around the globe between team members located in different time zones, so the working day is essentially extended to 24 hours without compromising the welfare and quality of life of individual employees. Such exemplars are likely to stimulate new creativity and imagination in the way teams work using new collaboration technologies.

Our experience during the pandemic also highlighted a range of other factors for teams and teamwork that have not been adequately studied. For example, full-time remote working in virtual teams, ironically, leaves behind visible trails of responsibility and accountability as well as organizational knowledge, which may affect behaviors and make it much harder for anyone to hide poor performance. The "weakest links" can be revealed more quickly and, in principle, the teams can act to address deficiencies and self-regulate through immediate discussions and communications. However, such information can also be misused or abused to monitor employees and measure performance. More research is needed to systematically understand such emerging issues.

Although virtual teams have been with us for decades, we have never been forced to develop a set of best practices for leading remote teams at the capacity that has been brought on by this crisis. Our collective learning is profound. Whatever the future holds, the new normal is going to be significantly different from what we have been used to before the pandemic. Since teams are the fundamental building block of modern organizations, "team to market" offers genuine opportunities to transform organizations and work, and manage the transition to new ways of working by creating a new digital working environment using a new generation of workplace collaboration technologies. Those taking the leap ahead of competitors may find new opportunities to gain sustainable competitive advantages. Those failing to do so risk being left behind and might never recover.

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