
A framework for managing successful distributed collaborative teams

Experiences from a digital humanities national
infrastructure team project



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Learnings

\$7 million worth of national projects in eResearch space

- Multi-institutional (universities, institutions, government)
 - Multi-disciplinary and expertise (Health, HASS, Ecology, User Support)
 - Both projects and operations
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Archives & project partner locations

- State Archives
- eRSA
- Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office
- The Prosecution Project
- Griffith University
- National of Library of Australia



When you might need a distributed team

- Nationally significant/ operated collaborated project
 - Availability of specialised skills
 - Disparate institutions or local skills
 - International project or project partners
 - Working from home arrangements
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Challenges

Opposites attract:

- Teams are often multidisciplinary and have specialised skill sets (such as marketing, development and change management)

You're not their boss:

- These teams do not reside under a traditional single line management structure or within the same institution
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Distributed Collaborative Teams Framework

1. Setting the Culture

- Form identity
- Respect individual skills
- Safety and problem solving
- Have fun

2. Performance

- Individual accountability and ownership
- Competitiveness
- Transparency

3. Enabling Technologies

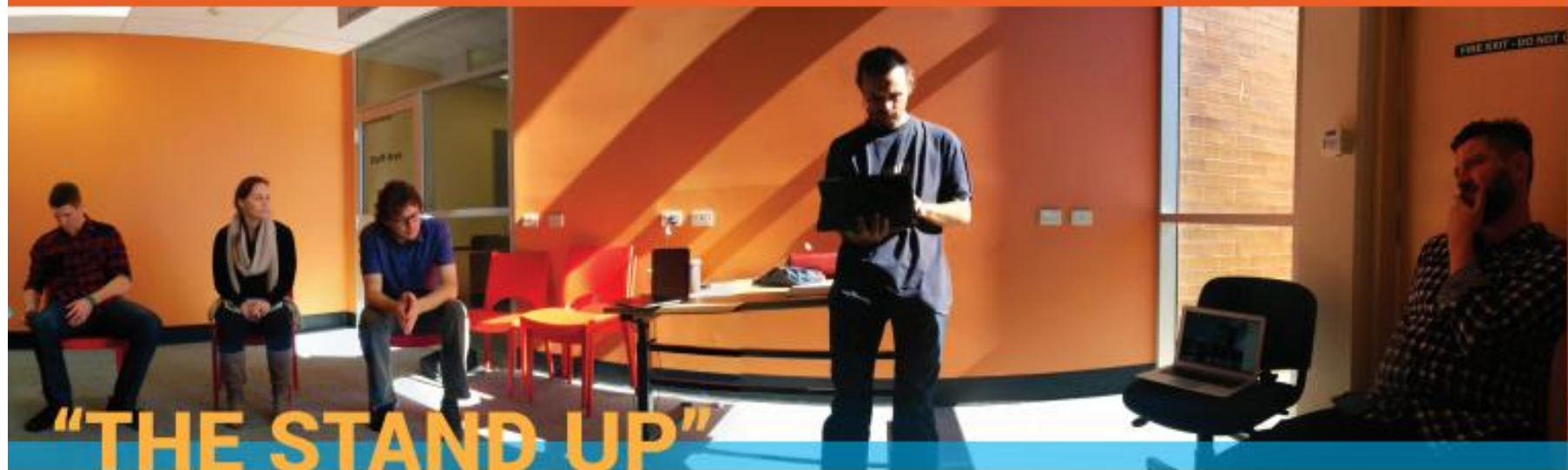
- Communications
- Collaboration tools
- Face-to-face

4. Governance

- Remove bureaucracy
 - Value institutional skills
 - Fund collaboration
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1. Setting the Culture

- Need to form a culture
 - Not always inherited from host institution
 - Shared culture of host institutions and team
 - Celebrate success and share problems
 - Respect and autonomy including individuals and institution
 - Shared ownership and encourage social interaction
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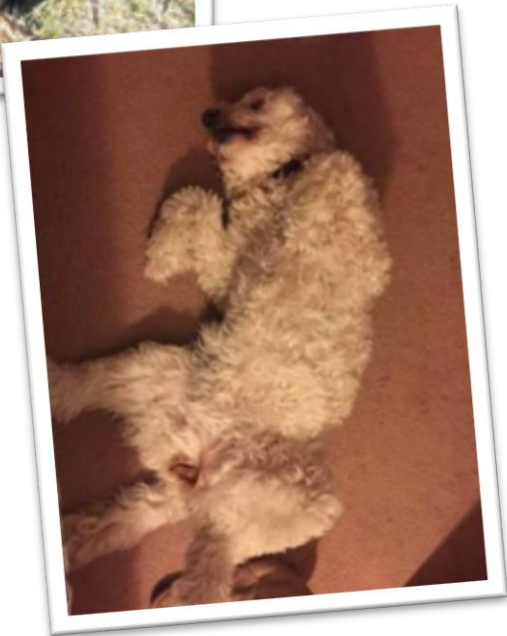


"THE STAND UP"

Great software requires great people, great communication and great vision.

The BCCVL Development Team

From left to right: Sam Wolski, Kelly Lennon, David Woolford, Adrian Lee & Cameron Maxwell on laptop, Gerhard Weis with Dan Yazbek on laptop, Willow Hallgren & Khanh Nguyen on laptop, Andrew Bowness, and Hamish Holewa.



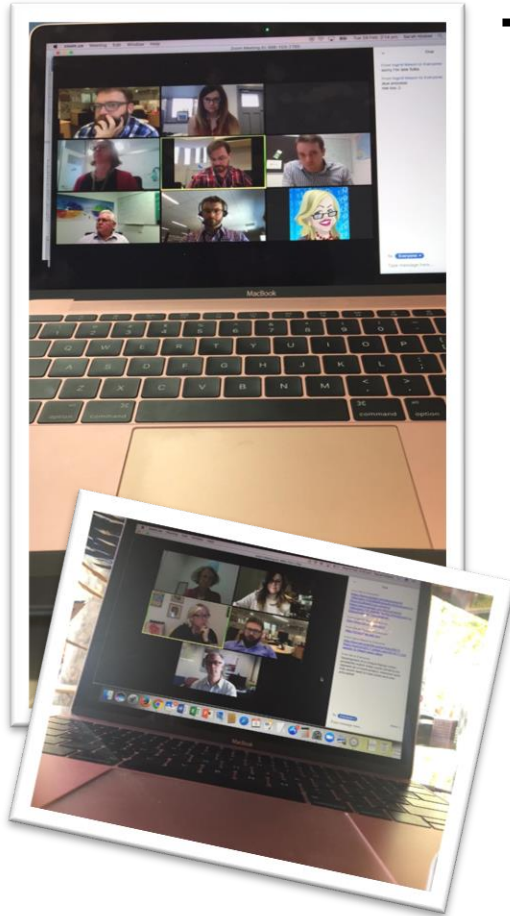
2. Performance

- Individual accountability
 - Ability for individuals to shine and not hide
 - Competitiveness
 - Allow others to see project outputs
 - Transparency
 - Team knows success, issues and resolutions.
 - Shared Goals and Vision
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3. Enabling Technologies

- Messaging Platforms/ Video Platforms
 - Increase social interaction.
 - Increase ad-hoc informal communication
 - Often not institutional software
- Collaboration Software
 - Share outputs, working documents, projects.
- Planes - face to face is still important



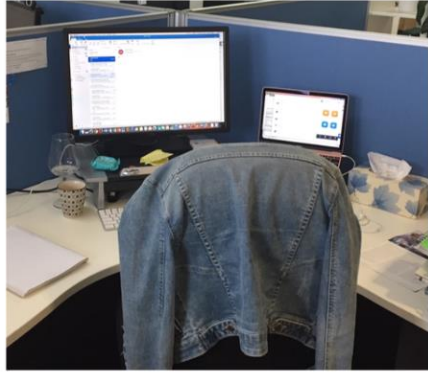


4. Governance

- Recognise collaboration
 - Ensure mechanisms in place for institutional members to participate
 - Other institutions 'sign off' on deliverables
 - Fund collaboration
 - Potentially higher PM costs. Travel/ meeting costs
 - Careful with imposing institutional norms on project team
 - Evaluate collaboration and transparency of outputs
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*Escalated tickets resolved in OLA timeframe - node breakdown

	Core Services	Node	Node	Node	Node	Node	Node	Node	Node	To
2016-02	41%	83%	100%	75%	100%	75%	50%	88%	60%	75%
2016-03	42%	57%	83%	0%	100%	71%	75%	70%	100%	66%
2016-04	52%	100%	100%	100%	80%	87%	80%	70%	89%	84%
2016-05*	79% (19 / 24)	40% (2 / 5)	50% (1 / 2)	50% (2 / 4)	100% (3 / 3)	94% (16 / 17)	100% (6 / 6)	88% (16 / 16)	86% (6 / 7)	76% (7 / 9)
2016-06	77% (20/26)	67% (4/6)	100% (2/2)	0% (0/3)	25% (1 / 4)	91% (10/11)	75% (3 / 4)	67% (10/15)	60% (3 / 5)	70% (5 / 7)
2016-07	68% (15/22)	38% (3 / 8)	50% (1 / 2)	33% (2 / 4)	50% (2 / 4)	75% (12 / 16)	71% (5 / 7)	71% (4 / 7)	43% (6 / 14)	60% (5 / 8)



Developing successful teams - toolkit

- Travel budget
 - Videoconference software (i.e Zoom, GoToMeeting etc)
 - Shared documentation hub (i.e Google docs, SharePoint)
 - Ability to delegate and foster shared ownership
 - Team members responsible for reporting own milestones/deliverables
 - Deliberately foster culture you want
 - Clearly set expectations
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Developing successful teams - setting up

- Getting started
 - All hands virtual meeting
 - Face-to-face kick off
 - High frequency virtual meetings
 - Communications
 - Shared documentation spaces
 - Face to face as frequently as possible (opportunities include workshops, conferences, stakeholder engagement)
 - Methodology
 - Team building
 - Encourage independence
 - Team members to work collaboratively to support each other
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Troubleshooting

- Good communication/ forums
 - With line manager
 - Recognition of institutional contribution in published material
 - Changes need to go through line manager - team members are not 'your staff'
 - Ensure performance is shared and visible amongst all project partners/ supervisors
 - Governance - helpful to have a regular meeting with supervisors etc
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How to be a great team member in a distributed team

- Be respectful: Acknowledge diverse skill set/personalities
 - Good opportunity to learn new skills/discover new working methods
 - Have good lines of communication with the Project Manager
 - Understand the overall aims/goals of the project
 - How does your work package align with the overall goals
 - What dependencies are on you
 - How can others in the project help and vice versa
 - Attend weekly meetings/ presence
 - Clearly communicate your progress
 - Explain your decision making progress
 - Give team members opportunities to ask questions/get involved in your work
 - Look for opportunities to assist fellow team members
 - Great opportunity to share skills/show different working methodologies
i.e what can developers learn from marketing approaches and vice versa
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Thank you

**Good luck with your collaborative
distributed teams!**

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