



Distributed Work (MIT Press)

By Pamela J Hinds

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Technological advances and changes in the global economy are increasing the geographic distribution of work in industries as diverse as banking, wine production, and clothing design. Many workers communicate regularly with distant coworkers; some monitor and manipulate tools and objects at a distance. Work teams are spread across different cities or countries. Joint ventures and multiorganizational projects entail work in many locations. Two famous examples -- the Hudson Bay Company's seventeenth-century fur trading empire and the electronic community that created the original Linux computer operating system -- suggest that distributed work arrangements can be flexible, innovative, and highly successful. At the same time, distributed work complicates workers' professional and personal lives. Distributed work alters how people communicate and how they organize themselves and their work, and it changes the nature of employee-employer relationships. This book takes a multidisciplinary approach to the study of distributed work groups and organizations, the challenges inherent in distributed work, and ways to make distributed work more effective. Specific topics include division of labor, incentives, managing group members, facilitating interaction among distant workers, and monitoring performance. The final chapters focus on distributed work in one domain, collaborative scientific research. The contributors include psychologists, cognitive scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, economists, and computer scientists.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is a terrific collection of up-to-date research and thinking on a very timely topic. Many, many managers are struggling to make sense of virtuality and the global diffusion of work teams. This volume, while short of glib and easy answers, will provide them with much-needed tools and approaches for understanding this new wave of workplace innovation and disruption.

(Laurence Prusak, Executive Director, IBM Institute for Knowledge Management)

Distributed Work is the most comprehensive collection of research on this topic I have ever read. Hinds and Kiesler have done a great service to the research community in producing this book. The chapters on historical business models are especially relevant to today's work world.

(Charles Grantham, Founder and Chief Scientist, Institute for the Study of Distributed Work)

About the Author

Pamela J. Hinds is Assistant Professor of Management Science and Engineering at Stanford University.

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