



PROPOSAL FOR COOPERATION

Flash (liquid) teams in the context of
human cloud platforms

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Just like modern cloud solutions scale capacity and services on demand, a modern team should have the right people with the right skills flowing in and out of the project development cycle in a perfectly coordinated way. We have on-demand cloud compute, cloud-native applications composed from on-demand microservices, and increasingly, the team resourcing models are shifting from fixed to human cloud-based liquid models.

We know a lot about teamwork, but teamwork in the human cloud context differs from teamwork in the traditional context. We know a lot about human cloud platforms (also known as open talent platforms) for individual freelancers; but open talent platforms that intermediate teamwork are less known.

Our study is focused on the interconnection of the two topics. It gives us an interesting and relevant area for research with great potential in terms of both theory and practical applicability.

Research Goals

The aims of our research are:

- 1 To advance understanding of how teams form and function at the intersection of gig-economy and traditional organizations.
- 2 To examine how new forms of organizing teams are changing organizations and their structures and vice versa.

Research Questions

How do liquid teams differ from regular teams?

- What is the role of informal member to member interaction (or lack thereof) in platform intermediated teams' functioning?
- What team roles typology applies to those teams?
- How do we rate liquid teams' effectiveness – objective measures vs. subjective perceptions? (organizational and individual perspectives)

Leadership in liquid teams

- What are the most and the least effective leadership behaviors in such teams?
- Organization-imposed vs. self-emerging leadership?
- How to balance the long-term motivation of in-house members with the short-term motivation of external members?

Research Team



Evgeny Kaganer (Research Leader) is the Dean for Academic Affairs at Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO.

His research focuses on understanding how rapid digitalization transforms business models and organizations. He has published on these topics in premier academic and business journals, including *Academy of Management Review*, *Management Information Systems (MIS) Quarterly*, *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, *European Journal of Information Systems*, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, *Communications of the Association for Computing Machinery* among others. His work on the impact of digitalization in business and education has been cited in major media outlets, such as the *Financial Times*, *Business Week*, *Forbes*, *Handelsblatt*, *CIO Magazine*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Evgeny has extensive experience working with senior executive audiences in Europe, North and South America, Asia and Russia. He has taught and directed custom programs, and consulted with multinational companies, including Swire, UPS, Oracle, Schneider Electric, McDonald's, ERSTE Group, Amadeus, Carlsberg, Amplifon, Rostelecom, Gazprom Oil, and Evraz among others.

He is also keen on exploring how advances in technology and pedagogy reshape management education. In this regard, he served as Academic Director for Learning Innovation and Executive Sponsor of IESE Online. He currently spearheads the transition of SKOLKOVO to online and blended learning formats.



Mike Szymanski is Assistant Professor of Strategy at Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO.

He joined the School in 2020. Mike was awarded his PhD in international management and organization from the University of Victoria (Canada). His research activity is focused at the confluence of international business, global leadership, and human resource management.

He is currently leading an international study on the role of linguistic diversity and boundary spanners in multicultural teams in MNCs in Latin America. His research has been published in *International Business Review*, *European Journal of International Management*, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, and *Advances in Global Leadership*. Before joining academia, Mike worked in strategic management consulting.



Ivan Smagin is a Researcher at Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO.

Ivan's current research objectives are mainly in discovering how new technologies influence human intellectual work and collective intelligence.

Research background

The digital revolution and rising gig economy is dramatically reshaping today's and tomorrow's workplace and the future of work. These changes include a sharp reduction in the traditional employer-employee relationship. New digital talent platforms allow economic activity to be organized in ways that shift much of what was traditionally accomplished by full-time workers within an organization to a human cloud of individual entrepreneurs and on-demand workers. As companies grow more comfortable with online marketplaces as an alternative to agencies or consultancies, they are also increasingly asking freelance platforms to provide multiple experts to complete more complex and strategic projects.

In January 2020, Moscow School of Management, SKOLKOVO and Russia's leading freelance marketplace for experts, Professionals 4.0 (P4.0) launched a joint research project aimed at discovering how alternative forms of employment involving freelance marketplaces as new intermediaries are adapted in the B2B setting.

The first phase of research was conducted in January – July 2020:

- 1 We have identified key drivers that encourage enterprises to adopt human cloud platforms. These drivers include access to skills, lower costs, bigger flexibility and other.
- 2 We made a distinction between working groups and teams in human cloud context.

We have realised, that working groups and teams differ in attributes of goals, motivation, team roles and communication. Working groups and teams also suit more to different types of projects – we call them obvious projects and complex projects.

How will the data be collected?

We plan a series of Zoom interviews with team members working with different freelance platforms, and company executives and project owners who are hiring on-demand talent to work on complex projects to enhance in-house teams.

What sort of commitment is necessary on the company's side?

- Recommendation and organizational support in reaching out to several project teams
- Several in-depth interviews with the company's staff/officers (30-45 minutes)
- Optional: team performance measures and/or within teams' communication metadata
- Optional: short survey across some teams

Will the data be kept confidential?

We are always very mindful of strict confidentiality. Neither your name nor your company's name will be identified in the transcribed data, or in the results of our research. Any identifying information you provide will be coded via the use of pseudonyms or similar means to protect anonymity. All of these data will be stored on password-protected, encrypted computers to guard against unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification, loss or theft.

Only the principal and co-investigators will have access to these data. If desired, we will work with members of your legal team to ensure that the study findings can be shared publicly. No information will be ever disclosed without an official signoff.

What are the benefits of participating?

The organization participating in the study will receive the final report of study findings and recommendations. As one of the first comprehensive examinations of teams in the human cloud context, this report will benefit anyone who is currently working in this area.

Key highlights of this study will be published in relevant journals and magazines, increasing visibility of the participating organizations and their forward-thinking executives. If you wish (and authorize us to do so) your company's name may be included in these publications.

What is the timeframe for the project?

Our goal is to complete data collection by March of 2021 and report the findings by June of 2021.

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