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Meta-teams: Getting global work done in MNEs

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Meta-teams: Getting global work done in MNEs

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ABSTRACT

To allow for flexibility and global integration in multinationals, global teams are becoming more fluid, forming and dispersing quickly to address organizational needs. The coordination that takes place in these temporary agile teams is critical for global work. However, current conceptualizations of teams and methodological approaches do not provide a clear understanding of dynamic global teams and how they get global work done in multinational enterprises (MNE). To address this, we mobilize the teaming perspective (Edmonson, 2012) to explore global work in the complex matrix structure of Computer,[1] a large technology MNE. Our study includes interviews and observations from 40 global account teams. The findings suggest that an intermediate structure, which we call a *meta-team*, provides a referential space that supports teaming. Within the meta-team, operational practices and a common mind-set provide guidelines for member behavior and expectations. Additionally, teaming substructures form and change to adapt to activities. This study contributes to the literature by (i) demonstrating how dynamic global work gets done in MNEs using meta-teams and teaming, (ii) showing how meta-teams address some of the challenges of global work such as fluid collaboration and multiple team participation, (iii) providing new insights for teaming-in-context and temporary work.

Keywords: global teams; meta-teams; teaming, multinational enterprises, MNEs

INTRODUCTION

Global work, defined as the ensemble of activities aiming to achieve global organizational outcomes, is changing the shape of teams. To compete in a knowledge-based economy, multinational enterprises (MNEs) require flexibility and cross-functional collaboration (Doz & Kosonen, 2008), as well as the ability to mobilize the local resources and knowledge embedded in different countries (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989). To accomplish this goal, MNEs leverage global teams that pull together diverse sets of expertise (Dahlin, Weingart, & Hinds, 2005) and integrate knowledge globally (Ambos & Schlegelmilch, 2004; Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2007; Lagerström & Andersson, 2003). As opportunities evolve in the environment, global teams form and divest, leading to a form of temporary organizing (Doz & Kosonen; Edmondson & Nembhard, 2009) characterized by increasingly dynamic and complex global teams (e.g., Schweiger, Atamer, & Calori, 2003; Welch, Welch, & Tahvanainen, 2008). These trends are changing the nature of teams (Oldham & Hackman, 2010).

Because most of the research on global teams to date rests on a conceptualization of teams as being static (Edmondson, 2012) and bounded (Mortensen & Hinds, 2002), we still lack a thorough understanding of dynamic global teams and how they get global work done. While dynamic and flexible coordination (Doz & Kosonen, 2008) is critical for global work, the study of team fluidity is largely absent from the global team literature. Although existing empirical work on global teams with dynamic features exists, it tends to use research designs that exclude or minimize these features (e.g., Cummings & Haas, 2012; Haas, 2006; Majchrzak, More, & Faraj, 2012; Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000).

To improve our understanding of the dynamic nature of global teams, researchers need new conceptualizations of teams and new methods of study. Edmondson (2012) proposes a "teaming" approach, which emphasizes active forms of collaboration and coordination without stable team structures. From a teaming perspective, team boundaries can be blurry (e.g., Kellogg, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2006; Mortensen & Hinds, 2002) and team membership can be unstable and unfixed (e.g., Edmondson; Gibbs, 2009; Hackman & Wageman, 2004; Mathieu, Tannenbaum, Donsbach, & Alliger, 2014). Thus, "teaming" is a useful conceptual lens to research the movement and complexity found in global teams.

This paper mobilizes the teaming perspective to explore global work in the complex matrix structure of Computer,[1] a large technology MNE. Our initial objective was to understand complex global teams. Using grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), our research question evolved through the data collection and analytical process. During this empirical journey, we discovered that global teaming happens within a structure that, by traditional definitions, is neither a traditional team, nor a network. We coin this structure a "meta-team." This development led us to the emergent research question: "How do meta-teams facilitate global work?"

Our research provides important contributions to the study of teams and global work in MNEs. We introduce the concept of the meta-team, an intermediate team-like structure that allows dynamic teaming to take place within the complex matrices of MNEs. Meta-teams provide a shared space of reference through common mindsets and operational practices that make the continuous movement between local and global possible. We also introduce three teaming modes linked to specific activities, describing how managers leverage them to conduct global work effectively. Our findings have important implications for theory and practice,

offering new understanding regarding the complexity of dynamic global teams associated with getting global work done.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To mobilize local resources (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989) and compete in a knowledge-based economy (Doz & Kosonen, 2008), MNEs leverage matrix structures (Doz, Santos, & Williamson, 2001). While we know that matrices require new forms of team coordination to tackle the challenges of global work, we know very little about how this process happens. Within these matrix structures, dynamic teams are commonly used to combine flexibility and global integration. However, how these teams interact with the larger organizations has been largely ignored (Jimenez, Boehe, Taras, & Caprar, 2017). These complex and dynamic teams are considerably different from traditional teams: "the global nature of work in organizations today, in which knowledge-intensive teams are fluid and dynamic, challenges what we know about the design of work teams" (Cummings & Haas, 2012: 334). Yet, much of the current team research still subscribes to a static notion of teams. For example, Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp, & Gilson (2008: 411) adopt Kozlowski and Bell's (2003: 334) definition of "collectives who exist to perform organizationally relevant tasks, share one or more common goals, interact socially, exhibit task interdependencies, maintain and manage boundaries, and are embedded in an organizational context that sets boundaries, constrains the team, and influences exchanges with other units in the broader entity." Embedded in both practitioner and academic consciousness is the archetypal understanding of teams as bounded and stable entities (Mortensen, 2015). This perspective is ineffective when describing the team dynamics found in new organizational forms (Wageman, Gardner, & Mortensen, 2012).

Hence, traditional conceptualizations of teams cannot capture much of the work currently happening in MNEs. For example, teams are not necessarily stable: "In a growing number of organizations, the constantly shifting nature of work means that many teams disband almost as soon as they've formed. You could be working on one team right now, but in a few days, or even a few minutes, you may be on another team" (Edmondson, 2012: 14). Additionally, team membership and boundaries are often unclear in the complex matrices of MNEs: "In increasingly fluid organizations, it can be difficult to decide who is a member of the team and who is not. Team membership can be defined broadly to include multiple boundaries (e.g., members from other organizations, members with a small-time commitment to the project)" (Espinosa, Cummings, Wilson, & Pearce, 2003: 183). Additionally, work in new organizational forms may also require contributors to participate and split their time across multiple teams within an organization (Mortensen, Woolley, & O'Leary, 2007; O'Leary, Mortensen, & Woolley, 2011), further altering the meaning of team boundaries and membership.

To address this issue, researchers are challenging traditional conceptualizations and finding new ways to study dynamic team features (e.g., Okhuysen, Lepak, Ashcraft, Labianca, Smith, & Steensma, 2013). The concept of teaming, which is the dynamic assembly of individuals for a temporary common purpose largely determined by shared mindsets and practices (Edmondson, 2012), captures the movement where teams "rapidly form, reorganize, and dissolve" (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999: 791). Organizations in a variety of sectors, ranging from high tech to hospitals, leverage teaming for temporary work, like problem-solving or innovation (Edmondson). Because the teaming approach allows for the study of dynamic team features, we adopt it as our lens to study how meta-teams facilitate global work in complex matrix structures.

Global Teams and Teaming

In order to gain a thorough understanding of the extent to which researchers have considered the teaming perspective to study global teams and, more generally, how teams contribute to global work, we analyzed empirical articles on global teams in 15 of the top academic journals[2] between 2000 and 2017. We began with 73 empirical articles, but excluded 16 experimental or student teams, one meta-analysis, 11 multicultural teams in a domestic setting, and three cross-cultural comparisons. We then studied the content of the remaining 42 articles.

Our systematic literature review on global teams shows little evidence of researchers using a teaming approach. While most of the articles do not discuss dynamic characteristics in their research, some do: eight mention unstable membership, five mention unclear team boundaries, and nine mention multiple team participation. Still, these researchers do not capture the dynamic nature of the teams they studied. Several authors explicitly simplified their studies to exclude the less stable (Haas, 2006; Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000) or non-permanent members (e.g., Cummings & Haas, 2012). Other researchers (Majchrzak et al., 2012) described their teams as fluid, temporary, and loosely bound with part-time membership; however, they did not focus on these dynamic aspects. The detailed descriptions of team members, their jobs, and perceptions give the impression of a clear, stable, and bounded entity. There is thus evidence to support Mortensen's (2015) argument that researchers make assumptions concerning the stability, clarity, and membership of the teams they study. Our systematic review confirms that a change of perspective is needed if we want to extend our understanding of dynamic teams.

Global Teams and the Challenges of Getting Global Work Done

While extant literature on global teams has not yet integrated dynamic approaches to teams, it does provide a strong background on the importance of teams for getting global work done. Several articles briefly address the question of *why* companies leveraged teams, concentrating on three main areas concerning how global teams contribute to global work. First, organizations leverage global teams to share knowledge (Baba, Gluesing, Ratner, & Wagner, 2004; Dameron & Joffre, 2007; Majchrzak et al., 2012; Vahtera, Buckley, Aliyev, Clegg, & Cross, 2017) or to innovate (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Haas, 2006; Hajro & Pudelko, 2010; Mendez, 2003; Schweiger et al., 2003). Companies see teams as a way to attain global understanding of local-level knowledge for creating policies or for product development (Barinaga, 2007; Barrett & Oborn, 2010; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Hajro & Pudelko; Lagerström & Andersson, 2003; Mendez; O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan, 2008; Zakaria, 2017). Second, global teams are useful for exploring opportunities (e.g., Lunnan & Barth, 2003), for instance by improving contact with local customers (Chevrier, 2003). Third, global teams are essential for managing resources globally. Global teams bring together resources for complex or cross-border projects (Cummings & Haas, 2012; Mendez; Puck, Mohr, & Rygl, 2008; Welch et al., 2008) and provide access to temporary resources in different countries (Gibbs, 2009). They can also contribute to efficiency by reducing costs through global harmonization (Joshi, Labianca, & Caligiuri, 2002; Lagerström & Andersson), offshoring (Cramton & Hinds, 2014), or leveraging time differences (Cunha & Cunha, 2001).

While global teams are essential to getting global work done, they do not come without challenges. Most of the studies in our review focus on these challenges or how to overcome them. The main difficulties hindering global teams from getting global work done are national culture and geographic distance (e.g., Gibson & Gibbs, 2006). Both contribute to power issues

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and conflicts (Barrett & Oborn, 2010; Cramton & Hinds, 2014; Hinds & Mortensen, 2005; Vallaster, 2005; Zimmermann & Sparrow, 2007), the creation of subgroups, and isolation within teams (Ambos, Ambos, Eich, & Puck, 2016; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Gibbs, 2009; Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003; Hinds & Mortensen; Joshi et al., 2002; Lagerström & Andersson, 2003; Li & Hambrick, 2005; Metiu, 2006; Schweiger et al., 2003; Vahtera et al., 2017), as well as communication and coordination issues (Barinaga, 2007; Cunha & Cunha, 2001; Dameron & Joffre, 2007; Driedonks, Gevers, & Van Weele, 2014; Elron & Vigoda-Gadot, 2006; Espinosa, Slaughter, Kraut, & Herbsleb, 2007; Gibbs; Hinds & Mortensen; Lagerström & Andersson; Schweiger et al.; Tenzer, Pudelko, & Harzing, 2014; Welch et al., 2008; Zakaria, 2017; Zimmermann & Sparrow).

Extant literature provides insight into possible "solutions" for these challenges, which can be broadly regrouped into three main categories: team composition, team processes and culture, and organizational support and culture. First, team composition should include a balanced mix between global expertise and local knowledge (Haas, 2006). Additionally, a stream of research discusses the importance of the individual characteristics of team members, such as: culturally intelligent and multilingual team leaders (Hajro & Pudelko, 2010; Schweiger et al., 2003; Tenzer et al., 2014), boundary spanners (Baba et al., 2004; Chevrier, 2003; Cramton & Hinds, 2014; Joshi et al., 2002; Mattarelli, Tagliaventi, Carli, & Gupta, 2017; Vahtera et al., 2017), or, more broadly, the cultural sensitivity and language proficiency of members (Puck et al., 2008).

Second, in relation to team processes and culture, researchers insist on the significance of the early stages of team development, where team preparation (Lunnan & Barth, 2003), early team clarity (Driedonks et al., 2014; Lunnan & Barth; Maynard, Mathieu, Rapp, & Gilson, 2012; Mendez, 2003; Vallaster, 2005), and being familiar with the tasks (Espinosa et al., 2007;

Vallaster) are important to driving success. Further processes such as prolonged contact (Baba et al., 2004; Dameron & Joffre, 2007; Espinosa et al., 2007), respectful interactions, dialogue, communication (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Espinosa et al., 2007; Hinds & Mortensen, 2005; Vallaster), and adaptation through trial and error (Chevrier, 2003, Cramton & Hinds, 2014) can facilitate interactions. Finally, team members need a context in which they feel psychologically safe (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Majchrzak et al., 2012). For example, Barinaga (2007) observed the use of cultural discourse to acknowledge tensions without any party losing face. Such integrative processes can lead to a shared identity or team culture that develops overtime and can help overcome global team challenges (Cunha & Cunha, 2001; Earley & Mosakowski; Hinds & Mortensen).

Third, researchers underlined the importance of the organizational context and support. Strong organizational cultures (Chevrier, 2003; Elron & Vigoda-Gadot, 2006; Hajro & Pudelko, 2010; O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan, 2008; Tenzer et al., 2014) – or more broadly, a strong common focus and respect for the client and stakeholders – can help collaboration within global teams (O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan; Schweiger et al., 2003). Organizational support is also important. Some researchers propose human resource management tools to support teams (Schweiger et al.; Welch et al., 2008), such as adapting compensation and performance evaluations (O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan; Puck et al., 2008; Welch et al.), or providing cultural training for communication (Zakaria, 2017). Finally, Mendez (2003) found that global research teams benefit from project structure and procedure standardization at the organizational level.

Our systematic review provides insights into what type of global work is facilitated by global teams, as well as the challenges they face and possible solutions. However, considering the importance of flexible collaboration for MNEs (Doz & Kosonen, 2008), the question of

teaming is crucial for understanding global work and requires further investigation. None of the studies reviewed examined dynamic teams that form and divest, depending on context, or how they contribute to global work. Altogether, our understanding of teaming in global complex MNE matrices is limited. This study is a first step in exploring these issues.

METHODS

We studied the single case of Computer, a large technology firm, using grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using this abductive approach (Charmaz, 2006), we moved between data collection, analysis, and literature. This kind of qualitative research provides both a methodological fit for immature research (Edmondson and McManus, 2007), as well as the opportunity to observe, describe, and explain complex dynamics (Zalan & Lewis, 2004). Based on grounded theory methodology, and in line with exploratory work, the research question was broadly framed; our initial objective was to understand complex global teams. As concepts emerged from the data (Charmaz), our research became more focused, leading to the specific question: "How do meta-teams facilitate global work?"

Research Setting

After an initial meeting with vice presidents in human resources and global sales at Computer, the company agreed to an exploratory study to help global account managers reflect on the way they lead their teams. Global account managers are responsible for selling to Computer's global customers. Within this client-supplier relationship, multiple collaborations exist simultaneously across the globe. For example, the client could be upgrading products in Latin America and considering the potential savings from moving their technology center to Asia, while placing a request for a global solution at their headquarters.

The global account manager is generally located in the country of their customer's headquarters. The global account team is spread worldwide and includes a core team and an extended team. The core team varies between four to seven members, who dedicate 25 percent or more of their time to the account and tend to include two to three different nationalities. The extended team generally has a higher turnover than the core teams and can include as many as 50–100 contributors who allocate 25 percent or less of their time to the account, contribute to multiple accounts, and typically include several nationalities. The sales representatives on the global accounts' extended team partially work on commission and can make their quotas in any of the accounts in which they participate.

At Computer, global accounts overlap the company's two main matrix structure dimensions: business units and geographical areas. The core-team members with global roles, such as the account manager, chief technical advisers etc., report directly to global accounts management. However, most of the extended-team members report not to the core team, but to their respective business units and countries. Because the matrix is in general organized for domestic work, when global work is required, global accounts managers must pool resources from different business units and liaise across geographies, languages, and professions to serve the global client as one team.

Research Design and Theory Development

Following grounded theory standards, we interrelated data collection and analysis (Suddaby, 2006) to ensure the integrative theory building process. We used methods such as theoretical sampling, constant comparison, iterative coding, and saturation norms (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). For theoretical sampling, we determined the data collection iteratively to elaborate and refine emerging categories as well as fill out their properties

(Charmaz). The variety of perspectives captured in the process of theoretical sampling allowed for both the grounding of theory and the creation of variation and conceptual density (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). We deliberately chose interviewees and sites to make sure we challenged developing concepts with as diverse situations, respondents, and environments as possible.

We combined interviews and on-site observations (see the description of data sources below). Time between interviews and on-site observations allowed for reflection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Because "concepts are the basic units of analysis" in grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990: 7), we compared and contrasted concepts that emerged, changing levels of analysis as needed to understand concepts and build them into categories (Corbin & Strauss). For field notes, we relied on open coding techniques. We wrote memos of interview impressions, observations, and possible theoretical threads immediately after interviews to guide theoretical sampling and to highlight emerging concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We used NVivo® as a tool for organizing and analyzing data. Instead of delineating teams using boundaries or relying on traditional characteristics such as stable membership and full-time participation, we focused on their *raison d'être* (Okhuysen et al., 2013) and how it fueled collaboration. In doing so, we were able to capture the dynamic movement of the team. This iterative process of data collection and analysis took place in four stages.

Stage 1. Our interest in the dynamic nature of global teams increased after a few visits to Computer, when we began to realize that the teams observed were not like traditional teams. During several of the first interviews, we asked, "How many contributors are on your team?" Global account managers typically responded, "Ten to thirty, it depends," or "What team are you talking about?" or with similar questions. These responses led us to examine the meaning of "team" at Computer further. Following suggestions of comparing emerging concepts with

literature from grounded theory specialists (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), we began comparing our account team data to team characteristics from extant team research. More specifically, we examined changes in the stability of team membership (Edmondson, 2012), the extent to which membership is clear and agreed upon (Mortensen & Hinds, 2002), the attention (focused or dispersed) that multi-team members temporarily give to a given account (O'Leary, et al.), and the clarity of team boundaries (Espinosa et al., 2003). Concepts from the literature helped us to make sense of the changing properties of the global account team. This abductive approach of open coding, analysis, and referring to literature led to the emergence of the concept of "movement in team."

We used axial coding to examine "movement in team" with the data we had already collected and began comparing between global accounts. We used theoretical sampling to explore the "movement in team" concept, asking respondents and ourselves (in memos) questions about the emerging concept such as, "Why, when, and how does the team change?" The responses introduced new properties into the concept. We found patterns in the "movement in teams." For example, sometimes the collaborations within the global account team were fluid and unclear, such as during day-to-day relationship building. However, sometimes pockets of collaboration in the global account team included activities with stable and clear membership. Over time, we linked this movement to the concept of teaming (Edmondson, 2012) and began tracking different modes of teaming.

Stage 2. To broaden the understanding of different teaming modes, we conducted additional interviews (16) focusing on team members. We included questions about team movement and changes between teaming modes. For example, we asked multiple team members how their work differed on each account, how and when resources were brought in during the

different modes, and if they considered the global account as a team, rather than just feeling like colleagues in a department. We went back through the collected data and refined our understanding of the differences in terms of characteristics that could be observed between teaming modes, leading to further distinction between "fluid," "viscous," and "tight" teaming.

A better understanding of the teaming modes within the global account team made us rethink the purpose of the global account team itself. For example, we observed that contributors who were working on multiple teams referred to the global account team to better understand how to work and sell effectively. Inspired by Edmondson's (2012) work on teaming, we introduced new terms such as "practices" and "mindset." However, our emerging data brought new meaning and understanding to these terms, so we redefined them as categories and named them "operational practices" and "common mindset" to clarify these new meanings. This analytical process led us to consider the account team as a unique entity, or a shared space of reference, which we named a "meta-team."

Stage 3. During this stage of the research process, we continued theory building, using selective coding. We exchanged our ideas with internal and external experts, presenting our results to informants to ensure that our representations provided an accurate voice to their experience (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Sinkovics, Penz, & Ghauri, 2008), and verifying emerging frameworks (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These exchanges brought nuance to the properties of our categories of meta-team and teaming modes. For example, in the meta-team we teased out the properties of the common mindset category, distinguishing conservative or innovative mindsets. In the teaming category, we specified the properties of fluid, viscous, and tight teaming categories according to their structural characteristics, such as stable or unstable membership. At this stage, the connection between each teaming mode and the work on the

global account became clearer. For example, building client relationships was linked to fluid teaming, while informal opportunities were linked to viscous teaming. We also began to understand the encompassing role of meta-teams for teaming and explored the relationship between meta-teams, teaming and global work. These developments crystalized our research question.

Stage 4. At this point in the research, our concepts of teaming and meta-teams were clear. We had linked teaming to meta-team structures, as well as to the different activities in the global account. We also understood the importance of the global account within the overall matrix. However, the interviews and observations included both domestic and global work, while we wanted to focus on global work. We therefore inductively recoded all interactions and processes in our data that specifically dealt with global work. We then aggregated these issues into categories and mapped each back to the meta-team and teaming. Table 1 provides the final data structure for meta-teams and teaming modes.

Insert Table 1 about here

Data Sources

We used two data sources: interviews and observations. Table 2 provides a summary of the data sources used resulting from our theoretical sampling. Site visits were intense, generally lasting from early morning to late at night across a period of two to five days. Face-to-face interviews generally lasted an hour and phone interviews lasted from 30-45 minutes.

Insert Table 2 about here

Interviews. At the beginning of the research process, we concentrated on top management and global account managers in three countries. Based on theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) and to increase conceptual density by adding variation to the emerging concepts, we included more team members as the research evolved: directors of technology, country account managers, regional directors, and team members. Interviews changed, with questions becoming narrower to address the dimensions and properties of the emerging concepts. For example, the refining concepts of Stage 3 of the project focused on multiple team members, allowing for comparisons between different accounts and situations. Table 3 provides a sample of the types of questions asked as the project evolved.

Insert Table 3 about here

Observations. Also applying theoretical sampling to observations, the first author traveled to different sites to gather data. Being on-site allowed access to multiple sources, ensuring a broader and deeper understanding of the issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The first author attended meals, meetings, team-building sessions, social events, and two multi-day off-site retreats, which brought together account managers from around the world. Thus, the study includes insights from global account managers of several nationalities, including Austrian (2), Argentinian (1), British (2), Colombian (1), Croatian (1), Finnish (1), French (4), German (8), Swedish (3), Swiss (3), Russian (2), and Japanese (2). Observation of and participation in meetings provided important opportunities to understand how the meta-teams worked, as well as the challenges they posed. For example, during a site meeting in Germany, one presenter

discussed how to build opportunities across the globe within the account teams. In another global account meeting in Switzerland, a vice president promoted best-practice sharing between account teams.

RESULTS

The global account teams are structures where temporary organized work and coordination of resources across the matrix take place. The ever-changing mix of team members collaborate to serve their global customer. Edmondson's (2012) concept of teaming accurately describes the constant movement inside the global account team. However, the global account team provides the structure that teaming needs to be successful. The global account team is not a traditional team, nor a project team embedded in the matrix, nor is it a functional department or division inside the matrix. Yet, it is crucial for getting work done. We therefore coin this structure a *meta-team*. We found that effective teaming is only possible because of the meta-team, which provides a clear space of reference in an otherwise complex, ambiguous, and ever-changing environment. To demonstrate how meta-teams enables global work, we first describe the importance of the shared space of reference by detailing how different meta-teams create specific common mindsets and operational practices based on client needs and maintain them through socialization. Second, we explain four ways in which meta-teams facilitate global work: global client orientation, cultural mediation, global problem-solving, and managing resource allocation. Finally, we delve deeper into dynamic teaming. We describe in detail the different teaming modes within the meta-team, and how each uniquely enables global work.

Meta-Teams as a Shared Space of Reference

The meta-team provides a *shared space of reference*, allowing members belonging to multiple meta-teams to "switch gears" and adapt to the *modus operandi* of a specific account.

This shared space of reference is established through the combination of a common mindset (an ensemble of assumptions regarding the values or priorities of the account) and operational practices (control systems and rules for how to work on the account), which team members learn through socialization practices.

Common mindset. The *common mindset* of each global account aligns with the needs and culture of the client and their industry. For example, Han's global account serves a public agency that values stability: "Continuity is a key problem for me because my client is a very conservative client. So, they value – and you can see that in hard numbers – they value continuity in their relationships. So, if I have someone three years in a row on that account, it will show in bigger numbers because they have a trust relationship built." The mindset of Han's account favors conservatism and stability. In contrast, innovation drives George and Darren's accounts in the high-tech field. Team members on these global accounts must keep up with the latest developments in technology to bring innovative insights to the client on a regular basis. The mindset of their accounts is based on innovation, not stability.

Common mindsets facilitate teaming by reminding part-time members who work on multiple accounts of the priorities and behavioral expectations for each account, allowing them to quickly adapt and collaborate more effectively. For example, Satoru, a representative with multiple accounts in Japan, explains how he adapts his style of working depending on the global account he is working on: "These accounts [points to paper]; I need to spend a lot of time. That means local decision-making and understanding the political constraints between local and global. On the other hand [points to another account], there is not this kind of structure. I just send an email, or make a phone call weekly, and a one-time visit is enough" (Observations, Book

4: 23). As Satoru knows how to work differently in each of the global accounts for which he is a member, he can quickly change his behavior to adapt.

Operational practices. In addition to common mindsets, each meta-team has a different set of *operational practices* (Observations, Book 4:48; Book 6:182). Control systems, or what Computer employees refer to as "governance," as well as rules about how to work in the account, constitute the operational practices within a given global account. Like common mindsets, these operational practices vary across accounts and adapt to the needs of the client. Selig, a regional account director, explains: "Each [global account manager] has his own governance... Whatever fits the account, but they very often have different structures." Operational practices provide guidelines for the behavioral expectations of the account, as Danko explains here: "I have four leaders in four different regions and when you meet these guys you tell them about the rules of your 'family' [global account] ... there are some rules which you make in the beginning... So that's very important. Kind of like a promise to each other of how we work together." These guidelines facilitate effective and productive interactions and, ultimately, teaming.

Socialization of new members. To maintain the common mindsets and operational practices for each account, core-team members oversee the socialization of new members. This process is vital, due to the challenges of fluid membership, as George explains: "You're facing a new set of characters that know the business, but do not know the account." In other words, knowing the business of sales is not enough to be effective; members must also understand how to work on each specific account. Core-team members are responsible for teaching new members these nuances, as the global leadership talent manager indicates: "We expect the [global account] managers to really take charge of acculturating folks to the business, the organization, the local culture within their account or their team." These socialization processes help new members

understand the shared space of reference by learning the account's common mindset and operational practices.

Meta-Teams Enable Global Work

Beyond providing a shared space of reference that facilitates teaming, meta-teams also provide a space to overcome some of the key challenges associated with global teaming by facilitating global client orientation, cultural mediation, global problem-solving and managing resource allocation.

Global client orientation. When work encompasses several countries, global customers expect coherence in the account's global strategy. Meta-teams ensure a clear understanding of the global vision and strategy, as well as coordinated communication across borders and business lines in relation to their customer, thus guaranteeing coherent client orientation beyond each individual sale. Bill, a regional account manager, states: "I see my job as making sure that they [my team members] understand what we're doing in the account team, they understand why they might do business… My job is to coordinate... If they are going to go in, I'm going to make sure they understand why they're trying to sell something, but also if they're doing that, how it fits with the rest of the sales specialists and whether or not there are synergies or complementary things we can do to join these things up for a better customer experience." At Computer, global account managers and core-team members align international communication to ensure that the team acts as a cohesive unit in the eyes of the customer and that team members fully understand the impact of the global work they undertake and its meaning for the client. Thus, team members like Johann in France operate as part of an international team: "I'm aligned with the team in Germany and in Spain. We talk to each other on a regular basis and when we have a European project, we have to work together to align and keep pushing the same message to the customer."

The meta-team enables the implementation and communication of a coherent worldwide strategy.

Cultural mediation. Meta-teams also help overcome cultural challenges by providing cultural mediation from core-team members. Computer recruits core-team members not only for their technical expertise, but also for their strong global experience, high cultural intelligence, and multilingual skills. Global account managers can switch languages and behaviors easily. For example, they "move from Spanish to English to German without hesitation" (Observations, Book 6:119). Core-team members regularly adapt communication to the different cultures at local levels. Darren, a global account manager, states: "If you say to an Asian team, 'This is really important, and you messed it up,' they'll nod and smile and most likely not do it, okay. You'll get a different response from a German who'll argue with you… The most important thing is who you're talking to and adjust to your messaging, so it's relevant to them and it fits their abilities to execute within their scope. … Sometimes you even go down to how you write an email." Local sales representatives, on the other hand, often work in their local language and local culture. So, while these members are generally proficient in English, they are less experienced in global operations. For this reason, core-team members liaise between team members in different countries. For instance, Tobias, a global account manager, mediates between the team members in Milan and the team members in Switzerland by connecting, developing and bringing them together (Observations, Book 1:17). Thus, core-team members act as cultural mediators to connect extended-team members in the meta-team as well as resolve communication issues and conflicts.

Global problem-solving. Meta-teams support global problem-solving to ensure sales processes within the account. When there is an obstacle blocking a sale at the country level

inside Computer, team members can escalate the problem to regional or global account managers, who can then negotiate with the top management in business units or specific countries and, if necessary, escalate the matter even higher. Likewise, if there are obstacles inside the client organization, team members can rely on the higher-ranking meta-team members to negotiate with senior members of the client organization. Llena explains how escalations within the meta-team solve problems: "You know that you have a project, but you need management assistance and you contact the account manager maybe from Central Eastern Europe. Somebody [who] has a higher level than you and you say 'I need help in this' […] Or you need a certain configuration of your products so that they are exactly what the customer needs... You need to involve another army of people that exist behind the selling process to make sure you have the correct configuration of the product." The meta-team provides the structure needed for these global escalations.

Problem-solving also happens horizontally inside the meta-team. For example, team members ask for help if they need assistance from their peers in different countries or those who have different areas of expertise. Haojun, a regional manager in Singapore, explains: "When anybody in other regions needs help on [a specific project] … my manager would expect me to help these individuals solve the problem even though it's not my direct responsibility." In addition to lateral problem-solving, team members on the same account support each other to reduce isolation and create cohesion. For example, Adelaide, a team member states: "Nicolas helps to get the US aspect of the story…It allows people to feel also part of the team. Because they feel they are not working on their own on the account because you know the account is so specific. It is a very difficult environment. So, when you connect them, they feel that there are other colleagues working on the same type of difficult deals. They feel they are part of a

community in a way." Like global communication and cultural mediation, structured global problem-solving and support is enabled by the meta-team.

Managing resource allocation. The meta-team structure is made up of core-team members reporting to global accounts and extended-team members allocated from business units inside the matrix organization. To maintain the composition of the meta-team, core-team members need to constantly negotiate for the resources to be allocated from the matrix to their account. David, a chief technical director explains: "If I look at [my account team], they definitely could benefit from having another specific account manager in the US and in Europe, and certainly in China. We need a Chinese-speaking native in China. The good old challenge is, of course, we need a level of business before the local businesses will permit that resource. It's the chicken and the egg: 'If you give me the person, we'll find the business; if you don't give me the person, I won't find the business.'" Much of the core-team's role is to negotiate the allocated resources to cover the scope of the account.

Once negotiated, core-team members must work to maintain the resources in the meta-team: "Now, there are lots of changes happening in Computer every day so sometimes people are moving on because they see other career opportunities, or because sometimes there's a new fiscal-year planning cycle, and people say 'No, you cannot afford this anymore in this country.' So, it's me adapting to this frequent and ever-changing environment to see how I can best keep the team together and if there are changes, to quickly integrate them back" (Hans, global account manager). In the context of Computer, fluidity creates perpetual movement in resources allocation in the meta-team, which requires constant effort to manage.

Overall, meta-teams provide global client orientation, culture mediation, global problem-solving, and resource allocation, which facilitate global work. To allow for teaming, meta-teams

provide shared spaces of reference through common mindsets and operations practices enabling

team members who are socialized into these spaces to adapt quickly when working on multiple

meta-teams.

Teaming Modes within Meta-Teams Enable Global Work

Within the meta-team, teaming takes place through multiple and parallel substructures

that constantly emerge and divest. These different "modes" of teaming directly contribute to

different types of global work. Below, we introduce these teaming modes: fluid teaming, viscous

teaming, and tight teaming. We then describe the characteristics of each mode in terms of

membership stability, membership clarity, focus of attention of multi-team members, and

substructure boundaries. Finally, we explain how they facilitate global work.

Fluid teaming. Fluid teaming enables the coordination of customer-relationship building

between global and local levels. At the global level, the core team conducts work on global-

strategy formulation and implementation, often with the assistance of the client's senior

management at their global headquarters. At the local level, extended-team members spend more

time with their clients than the global account team, building relationships at the local level that

lead to local and potentially global sales. In the fluid-teaming mode, relationships with clients

and global knowledge sharing within the meta-team enable the identification of global

opportunities.

Fluid teaming is characterized by unstable membership of extended teams. For example,

one global account manager says: "Last year, everybody was replaced on the [extended] team on

a worldwide basis." While managers have a list of extended-team members who are allocated to

the team at the beginning of the year, instability makes membership somewhat unclear over time.

Thus, membership of the extended team is always in question and fluctuates depending on the

opportunities and activities within the organization. Similarly, while a given percentage of time is allocated for extended-team members, the reality is less clear. As extended-team members participate in multiple teams, their focus is dispersed over their multiple accounts because, in practice, they are free to decide in which account they wish to invest their time to meet their sales quota. Instead of focusing their attention on one specific account, extended-team members spread their attention across their many clients, building relationships in each and focusing on those accounts with opportunities. Due to the high instability, unclear membership, and high dispersion of multi-team member attention, the boundaries of the substructure are unclear.

Due to the dispersed attention of the extended team, core-team members must spend their time and energy convincing them that their particular account team is the best place to meet their objectives: "As a global account manager, you are not allowed to say to people, 'You have to be there at this time…' We have to convince them with the deal or with the attractiveness of the customer and to win them to be part of the team." This is not a question of coordination and maintenance of resources, but rather engaging the attention of multi-team members already allocated to the account. By convincing existing members to invest their energy in their account, core-team members ensure that local/global sales happen. The meta-team provides a clear framework for this work.

The flexible and open nature of fluid teaming facilitates the assembly of knowledge gathered at global and local levels, which helps the account team identify commercial opportunities. We found three types of global knowledge sharing that enable this process. First, the core team *promotes a vision for opportunity creation* by disseminating strategic information obtained at the global level to local sales representatives to boost commercial sales opportunities. For example, one global account manager in Germany explains how he informs his team

members of the client's global evolutions: "I told my colleague in [the] UK, 'Hey, you have to address [UK CIO of the client] … because you have the chance to make big business. They will merge with another big, UK-based publishing company... So, you will have the chance to make big money with them, make big projects.'" By providing local representatives with strategic information gathered through privileged relationships with the top management of customers, core-team members offer ideas for opportunities that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Second, we found that global knowledge sharing also moves from the local level to the core team at the global level to *propose local opportunities worldwide*. Exchanges between extended- and core-team members lead to the identification of potential global business opportunities. Pierce (a country sales director) explains: "It could be [that] one of my salespeople is talking to [their] client, and they say, 'We buy Z laptops and we hate them, they're horrible, and we're probably going to have to buy another 10,000 laptops next year. We hate those Z ones, though.' And that's it. My salesperson should go, 'Hmm that could be an opportunity for us.' [They've] had a whisper that maybe they want to do something next July, we need to focus and chase on this." The core team can leverage knowledge from the local level to create a larger-scale project, either in multiple countries or globally.

Third, horizontal knowledge sharing, such as *global best practices* or discussions between extended-team members across borders, can also lead to commercial opportunities. During global account team conference calls, members learn about customer activities around the globe from each other. Team members can replicate or adapt an idea implemented in one country to their own countries, as Pierce describes here: "The whole reason that we would talk through all the biggest deals is so that my technical sales person here could see what my technical sales person in Singapore was doing, and vice versa. My person here could talk about a

project that he's doing that might then inspire somebody in Hong Kong to say, 'Oh, that's quite good, we could repeat this over here.'" Thus, horizontal knowledge sharing in the form of updates, discussing best practices etc. is important for discovering and disseminating commercial opportunities.

Viscous teaming. Viscous teaming allows for cost-effective "trial" teams that determine the interest and the feasibility of opportunities identified during fluid teaming. This endeavor requires flexibility. Hans explains: "There are a lot of checks when I come up with an idea, like: Is this a $10 million business or a $100 million business? How [much] do we know about it? Are we sure the customer has the budget? Who is the competition? Because once you form a team, you could quickly spend $100,000, $200,000, $300,000 without earning anything." During the viscous-teaming mode, global account managers and core-team members leverage the meta-team to analyze these questions in a quick and cost-effective manner, and to build wider support for potential opportunities.

Viscous teaming is characterized by unstable team membership, which fluctuates as the opportunity solidifies. Because the viscous-teaming mode is about assessing opportunities, the team members working on the opportunity are not officially allocated to initiatives, making membership unclear. If members choose to participate in the initiative, they shift their time and attention to focus on it. As a result, the dispersed attention found due to multi-team membership in fluid teams is reduced in favor of the temporary trial team. For example, David, a core-team member, discusses how they try to encourage their extended-team members to focus on an opportunity: "[We say,] 'I think this is a really important opportunity or a really important account. I'd like you to focus on it, please. Prioritize your time with the other accounts, make sure you keep this in focus.' Often, that's efficient. Sometimes, we need to go above them. Go to

manager or manager's manager and say, 'Guys, we really, really need this person to focus on this account right now, for these next ... whatever it is; ten days or whatever the case might be. Please can we get that?'" This focused attention is important for quick feasibility assessments. Still, despite the focused attention, the informality of the activity and the ambiguity of members' statuses make the boundaries of this mode unclear.

Viscous teaming involves *building internal support*. Complex initiatives need technical competence and a comprehensive understanding of the client at both the global and local levels. Like the coordination and maintenance of allocated resources in fluid-teaming mode, core-team members need to fight for talent, even if it is already allocated to the account. This activity is especially challenging in viscous-teaming mode because the opportunities are ambiguous, and outcomes are uncertain. One global account manager explains: "I need to convince people that this is now important to these people, which is part of my selling the importance of the account. Selling the size of the business, selling the 'We can win this.'" Core-team members, thus, spend time building internal support for informal opportunities, and convincing specific, highly skilled multi-team members to engage.

Not only do core-team members need to build support and encourage participation, but they also need to ensure that team members with unclear status are paid for their contributions. The ambiguity encountered at this stage provokes cross-border difficulties in terms of pay and resources. Several managers noted the difficulty: "You may have been through that step of encouraging them and getting them excited about working on your account, but as soon as they have an example where they're working on a deal and the deal drops in a different region and they don't get paid… you're not going to see them again." While the meta-team facilitates the alignment of members who are committed to growing the opportunity, assembling these

resources with uncertain outcomes requires further endeavors from the core team for the dynamic assembly of trial teams and their composition.

The viscous-teaming mode facilitates global resource pooling for temporary and cost-effective analysis. The structure of this mode enables *resource coordination for quick assessment*, pulling informal and temporary resources across business units, countries, and functional boundaries. One technical director explains, "Such kinds of complexity needs to be managed because you have to adopt solutions to fit local needs, local requirement that needs to be reflected into that solution. They have a global complexity, multi-team complexity, the complexity of meeting local requirements." Viscous teaming is important for global work because it is a cost-effective way to gather knowledge and make decisions on a global scale without having to commit to formalized procedures.

Tight teaming. Tight teaming is required for the "pursuit" of opportunities that have been formalized. Global account managers constitute a "pursuit team," chasing opportunities that have been identified in fluid-teaming mode and assessed in viscous-teaming mode, or when a client announces a request for proposal (RFP) or request for information (RFI). Pursuit teams consist of contributors from presales and sales, as well as technical and client experts on the global account team, who work together for a predetermined amount of time in order to put together a proposal for their client. This setup enables quick collaboration and efficiency facilitated by the shared space of reference. Although experts from outside the team might be required for punctual contributions, most are existing members of the account, and when pursuit is finished, they stay on the meta-team.

Membership is stable in tight teaming, with some movement as contributors roll on to or off the team as the bid evolves. For example, if during a pursuit the team discovers that a

solution different from the one initially envisioned might better meet the needs of the client, those specializing in the new solution roll on to the team and those who are no longer necessary roll off. Membership in the tight teaming mode is clear and accounted for, so there are fewer difficulties with extended-team members getting paid for their time. Additionally, unlike the fluid-teaming modes, gaining the attention of multi-team members is not problematic. Members of the extended team become, for the duration of the pursuit, part of a smaller sub-team, adjusting the time and attention they contribute so that the pursuit team has the best chance of winning the bid. Due to the complex solution-making that takes place in tight-teaming modes, the focused attention of multi-team members is intense, and the pursuit becomes their center of activity. This intensity is evidenced by pursuit teams working all night together or managers assembling team members into one place for a short period of time to meet the objectives: "When they got [the RFP] it was actually easier for us to fly people in, to a single location, and put them in the public room in Zurich." The intensity of pursuits differs from the distributed meetings often seen in viscous or fluid teaming. The stable and clear membership, with focused attention, creates clear boundaries.

Tight teaming facilitates the pooling of specific talent and global allocated resources, focusing team members' attention on the pursuit of a global initiative. While similar to the pooling of resources for viscous teaming, *resource coordination for creating complex global solutions* is different. First, the pursuit team is a formalized substructure. Dean explains how these teams are assembled: "Well, I wouldn't quite call it a project but it's an opportunity. What I will do is I'll assemble a virtual team out of my existing people. I always appoint a leader, that's the most important thing... In this case, I picked a guy in the US and I picked him because he has the best relationship with that particular business unit customer, just for this opportunity.

It could be somebody else next time." Second, as with viscous teaming, leaders within the meta-team begin formally bringing together resources for the initiative, finding and fighting for talent in the right countries. However, in tight teaming the focus is on creating complex solutions for clients, rather than assessment alone. This focus requires more rigorous and detailed work, which increases the complexity, problem-solving, and collaboration needs.

The meta-team allows *priority access to specific local knowledge* across the global accounts, which is needed for the formalized pursuit. Local members provide specific information about how the solution fits in their country, which is important because local laws and infrastructure may differ from country to country. David provides an example: "[The client] is very aggressively pursuing a global 'Bring your own device policy'... That literally means instead of the company giving you a laptop, instead of the company giving you a phone, etc., etc., you bring the one you want to use. Of course, it's not legally permissible in every country." In such a situation, quickly sharing local knowledge at a global level helps to build an adapted global solution for the customer. The meta-team facilitates this exchange of information.

Meta-Teams, Teaming, and Global Work

Figure 1 brings together our findings on meta-teams, teaming and global work into an integrative framework. Based on our results, we define meta-teams as "dynamic social entities that are recognized internally and externally as a shared space of reference of common mindsets and operational practices that facilitate teaming." Maintained by socialization processes, meta-teams in matrix organizations provide a shared understanding of how to collaborate, which allows members belonging to multiple meta-teams to adapt swiftly to specific *modus operandi*. Meta-teams facilitate the global work of global client orientation, cultural mediation and global problem-solving, thus addressing challenges traditionally associated with global teams.

Additionally, the meta-team creates a framework for the negotiation and maintenance of team-member allocation on a global scale, which facilitates teaming activities.

Ongoing teaming in adapted substructures also gets global work done. In the case of the global account at Computer, teaming allows for client-relationship building, growing opportunities and concretizing the ones that are viable. This global work is completed through three teaming modes. Fluid teaming is characterized by unstable memberships (high turnover) and somewhat unclear membership (despite clear allocation to accounts), dispersed attention due to multiple team participation, and unclear boundaries. Fluid teaming allows for the management of day-to-day client-relationship building and creates opportunities through global knowledge sharing. Viscous teaming is characterized by unstable and unclear membership, focused attention (which reduces the difficulty of multiple team participation), and unclear boundaries. Viscous teaming pools resources for trial teams to assess global opportunities. Tight teaming is characterized by somewhat clear and stable membership, focused attention, and clear boundaries. Tight teaming focuses on the elaboration of complex solutions to problems in formalized global pursuits through global resource pooling and access to local knowledge.

Each specific teaming mode can work in direct connection with other teaming modes, building in a sequence: opportunities are first identified in fluid-teaming mode, assessed and validated in viscous-teaming mode, then formally pursued in tight-teaming mode. While the boundary of the meta-team is difficult to delineate, its *raison d'être* is quite clear: in the case of the global accounts at Computer, it is to serve the global client. Within meta-teams, teaming is dynamic, with cooperation and contributors evolving with daily activities.

Insert Figure 1 about here

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to gain deeper understanding of how meta-teams facilitate global work. Our framework addresses this issue. We describe the meta-team, specify three different teaming modes (fluid, viscous, and tight), and explain how each contributes to global work. Our findings offer important theoretical contributions to scholarship in three areas: global work in MNEs, global teams' challenges, and teaming. We also provide considerations for practice.

Implications for Theory

Global work in MNEs. While some global team studies mention dynamic features (e.g., Cummings & Haas, 2012; Haas, 2006; Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000), most researchers have used static conceptions of teams that do not capture the dynamic mobilization of talent and resources that is necessary to get global work done. We leveraged a teaming approach (Edmondson, 2012), which provides new insight into how collaboration works in global organizations, particularly the processes and structures behind dynamic teams. We show that teaming happens in modes with evolving characteristics such as member stability, clarity, focus of attention, and substructural boundedness that adapt to different team activities. This assembly of adapted substructures help drive a variety of global work, such as coordinating talent and resources or facilitating ongoing local/global coordination. We move beyond stating the strategic importance of dynamic teams in MNEs (Doz & Kosonen, 2008) by explaining how team formation and divestment happens.

Responding to recent calls to focus on the interactions between global teams and the rest of their organizations (Jimenez et al., 2017), we demonstrate the importance of the traversal

structures of meta-teams that cut across the matrix to frame and facilitate teaming within the larger organization. Because meta-teams explain how agile teaming happens within the larger organization, it is essential to recognize their importance. Meta-teams enable coordination across the matrix, providing fluidity between more stable organizational units. They also provide the context and references necessary for members to shift quickly into a collaboration mode that is adapted to the specific global work that needs to be done. Our work provides evidence that agile teams in MNEs do not randomly form and then dissolve in a vacuum; rather, they evolve out of meta-team structures that align common mindsets and operational practices, which in turn support teaming.

Our research also demonstrates how meta-teams can introduce both agility and alignment into organizations. Indeed, at the organizational level, multiple meta-teams exist and can be added when work across the matrix is needed, without fundamentally reorganizing the matrix. In our case, the global account team hosts the strategic and dynamic assembly of resources across the matrix structure. Meta-teams add to complex matrix structures the capability of functioning in agile mode, which allows the flexibility necessary in contemporary organizations to get global work done. In addition, our findings move beyond the management of global resources and knowledge sharing associated with the activities of global teams (e.g., Cummings & Haas, 2012; Lagerström & Andersson, 2003; Mendez, 2003; Puck et al., 2008; Welch et al., 2008) by demonstrating that meta-teams can constitute a space for the elaboration, communication, and implementation of global strategy: in our case, commercial client-oriented strategizing. Core- and extended-team members coordinate strategy and communication globally to ensure coherent and consistent approaches and messages to clients across national borders. We also found that multiple pockets of teaming co-exist within each meta-team, parallel to one another, allowing the

MNE to handle multiple complex global tasks within a global strategy that require very different dynamic team arrangements simultaneously, while ensuring coordinated communication.

These findings thus fundamentally change our theoretical understanding of how global work gets done in complex matrix structures. Because global teams have been explored from a static perspective, extant research does not provide a clear account of how dynamic global teams contribute to getting global work done. We show that global work in MNEs gets done through teaming that occurs within meta-team structures. It is the unique combination of meta-teams and teaming that allow for the introduction of the agility necessary to get global work done. This combination facilitates resource management and knowledge sharing, as well as the elaboration, communication, and implementation of global account strategy.

Addressing the challenges of global teams. Our findings also provide insights into how meta-teams address some of the challenges of traditional global teams resulting from geographic and cultural distance (e.g., Gibson & Gibbs, 2006), but also those emerging from fluid collaboration and multiple team participation.

Like extant research, we found that the cultural and linguistic expertise of skilled individuals in a team can help overcome cultural differences (e.g., Schweiger et al., 2003). In meta-teams, the core-team members were often "cultural chameleons" or "cosmopolitan" (Haas, 2006; Levy, Lee, Peiperl, & Jonsen, in press). Being multilingual (e.g., Hajro & Pudelko, 2010) and having global identities (Lee, Masuda, Fu, & Reiche, 2018), core team members generally have high levels of cultural sensitivity and cultural intelligence (e.g., Puck et al., 2008; Schweiger et al.). This extensive global experience and cultural knowledge makes them effective boundary spanners or cultural mediators (e.g., Mattarelli et al., 2017). Their situation in the meta-team is ideal for transcultural brokerage as global connectors or integrators (Levy, et al., in

press). Our findings show that core-team members are able to resolve cultural tensions quickly when needed across large extended teams, allowing meta-team members to deal with cultural misunderstandings and conflicts as they happened. Core-team members connect extended-team members from different countries and help develop their cultural skills. The meta-team hosts the talent needed to overcome some of the challenges of geographic and cultural distance faced when doing global work. We show that these challenges can be addressed within the meta-team, which is important in a context where teams are fluid and talent is rare.

In addition, we demonstrate that meta-teams also address the challenges of national culture by providing a shared space of reference aligned with the customer, narrowing barriers between cultures. Like research that emphasizes the importance of strong team or organizational cultures (Chevrier, 2003; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Elron & Vigoda-Gadot, 2006), we found that common mindsets and operational practices provide a framework for behavior know-how, so members can accomplish work quickly and successfully despite cultural barriers. However, the meta-team shared space of reference differs from the cultural approaches found in the extant literature. The idea of team culture (e.g., Earley & Mosakowski) relates to a process where team culture emerges over time through social interactions, which implies that culture is very specific to the people in a single team and, consequently, identifying with the team is important (Hinds & Mortensen, 2005). In contrast, the meta-team shared space of references aligns with the industry and the needs of the customer, allowing for the constitutions of fluid collaborative efforts without necessarily having a shared identity.

The notion of each meta-team providing a different common mindset and unique set of operational practices associated with their specific industry and aligned with the client also differs from broader uniform organizational cultures (Chevrier, 2003; Elron & Vigoda-Gadot,

2006; Hajro & Pudelko, 2010; O'Sullivan & O'Sullivan, 2008; Tenzer et al., 2014). Strong identification with organizational culture may hinder leveraging multicultural identities (Fitzsimmons, 2013) and repress the diversity of behaviors and values needed to get global work done. Instead of aiming for some form of uniformity that overrides national culture, as previous research on global team suggests, each meta-team provides a specific frame of reference for how to behave in relation to a specific client. This frame of reference allows multiple team members to "switch gears" quickly and adapt as necessary, as they move from one account to the next. It also embeds the very principle of being a temporary element of reference that can be swiftly replaced if needed to perform global work. Common mindsets and operational practices are key to managing the diverse behaviors needed in multiple team participation. Shared spaces of reference allow for temporality that existing concepts of team and organizational culture do not.

It is important to note that our notion of common mindsets and operation practices, which refer to specific clients, moves away from Edmondson's (2012) understanding, which focuses on open attitudes, speaking up, collaboration, experimentation, and reflection. Instead, we insist on the importance of spaces of references, which are meant to be guides for temporary work. Thus, we demonstrate contextual adaptability and diversity of behavior as a way of managing global work, which sharply contrasts with the prescription of standardization of project structures and procedures at the organizational level (Mendez, 2003).

These findings are significant, as they facilitate multiple team participation and, more broadly, embed behavioral complexity across the workforce. Meta-teams are hence essential for allowing the diversity of behaviors necessary to get global work done. The shared references approach is more flexible because it does not require a stable team culture, nor an integrative organizational culture that does not allow for client/industry idiosyncrasies and cultural

complexity. Thus, meta-teams offer possibilities to overcome the challenges of geography, national culture, fluidity, and multiple team participation. The articulation between meta-team and teaming modes that relates to specific aspects of global work also introduces an ability to solve problems as they happen. This approach is important because, in the complex world of matrices in large MNEs, it is more efficient in terms of resource allocation, notably of rare talents.

Teaming and temporary organizing. Beyond global teams and global work, we contribute to the understanding and conceptualization of teaming. Edmondson (2012: 85) focuses on the power of framing, where "leaders and managers can use cognitive frames to highlight or encourage specific behaviors necessary for teaming." This approach is subtle and takes time for leaders to establish. We provide a more explicit method for understanding context: the meta-team, which is particularly important in situations that require members of multiple teams to regularly change behaviors on different accounts. This finding, which emphasizes the importance of situation and context, lead us to encourage team researchers to shift from a *team-centric* perspective to a *teaming-in-context* perspective. Indeed, while Edmondson's teaming approach has changed the perspective on teams from static to dynamic, the *teaming-in-context* perspective identifies the structures and context that fosters that teaming.

Similarly, we extend Edmondson's (2012) notion of teaming from a general conceptualization to the theoretical distinction of three specific teaming modes with specific characteristics in terms of member stability, clarity, focus of attention, and clarity of team boundaries. This extension provides insights into the nuances of organizing complex knowledge work through teaming. More specifically, we connect structural characteristics with activities that are performed for each teaming mode. For example, to foster opportunity identification on a

global scale, the attention of the extended-team members must be dispersed among the widest range of clients, corresponding to fluid teaming. These nuances "open the black box" of dynamic global teams, regarding both context and processes.

More generally, we contribute to temporary organizing, a key issue for contemporary MNEs. Extant work on temporary organizing (e.g., Edmondson & Nembhard, 2009; Lundin & Söderholm, 1995) and temporary organizing in global work (e.g., Haas, 2006; Lunnan & Barth, 2003; Welch et al., 2008) focus on project teams. We introduce the meta-team, another structure that can be leveraged for temporary organizing. Unlike project teams, where members go to their "homes" or usual department in the organization at the end of a project (Lundin & Söderholm: 442), meta-team members stay within the team. This distinction is important for quick, adapted, effective collaboration. Members have been socialized into the meta-teams' shared space of reference and thus know how to work effectively in different teaming modes when needed to perform specific work. To date, academic research focuses on project teams as a source of flexibility in MNEs; however, our research provides an alternative and possibly more effective approach, where teaming and meta-teams combine into agile structures that can "shift gear" and adapt swiftly to perform specific tasks.

Implications for Practice

In additional to theoretical contributions, our study has implications that are important for practice. The increasing need for flexible organization and global resource management has created pressure on managers to use dynamic global teams; however, research on global teams provides little information on how to function effectively in such an environment. Our findings provide answers to this end. In addition, our research explores a completely novel area by beginning to describe the activities in which core-team members engage to maintain the

existence of the meta-team and to orient teaming. Contrary to what happens in stable teams, the core team and team leader must maintain the constitution of their teams constantly by negotiating the allocation as well as the ongoing confirmation and attention of resources. Thus, within the organization, they must continually attract talent globally as a prerequisite for maintaining global coverage.

Limitations and Future Research

Our study provides a first investigation of the role of teaming in complex global MNEs. As this is an exploratory study, it has certain limitations, but it also presents opportunities for further research. We based our observations of, and distinctions between, three teaming modes on a single organization. While we expect other MNEs to exhibit similar teaming modes, it is also likely that more variation occurs in a multi-organization/multi-industry sample. We also expect that meta-teams and teaming modes appear in large domestic organizations and beyond global sales. For example, product management, customer support, professional services or account management in domestic settings may have similar structures and exhibit similar properties. Connected to this expectation, future research could connect teaming modes with specific performance outcomes in relation to specific aspects of global work and, more broadly, organizational work. For example, researchers could hypothesize which parameters drive the performance of meta-teams, including variables that explain variations in team performance, such as membership stability, clarity of membership, or substructure boundaries.

In addition, we studied meta-teams specifically dedicated to global account management, which is basically a sales activity; other dimensions of complex MNE matrices could lead to further insight. Thus, we invite researchers to investigate substructures in meta-teams corresponding to different teaming modes. Such substructures might differ in terms of both team

dynamics and purpose. Finally, although we described teaming at Computer, we did not follow

one meta-team over time to observe the micro-processes of team evolution. While we know that

the phases in the meta-team are different to those phases observable in classic, bounded team

studies, the actual development of teaming in time still needs to be uncovered.

Much of the complex global work done in MNEs today calls for flexibility and dynamic

organizational structures. Global meta-teams are at the core of these organizations because of

their ability to connect the local with the global, and to spread knowledge across national

borders. Yet, the current state of the global team literature does not capture how teaming could

contribute to such flexibility and dynamism. Our study contributes to changing perspectives on

these questions and, in doing so, opens important avenues for future research.

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FOOTNOTES

[1] For confidentiality reasons, we use Computer as a pseudonym.

[2] *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Cross Cultural and*

Strategic Management (formerly *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*),

European Management Journal, *Group and Organization Management*, *Human Relations*,

International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, *International Journal of Human Resource*

Management, *International Studies of Management and Organization*, *Journal of International*

Management, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of*

Organizational Behavior, *Journal of World Business*, and *Organization Science*.

Table 1

Final Data Structure

First-order concepts	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
• Priority of accounts differ based on industry • Multi-team members know how to act differently on different accounts	Common mindset	Meta-teams are a shared space of reference
• Accounts have different control systems • Accounts have different rules	Operational practices	
• Sales representatives need to learn how to work on specific accounts • Teaching team members how things work in the global account	Socializing new members	
• Ensuring a clear understanding of global vision and strategy across different countries • Align communication to client across countries and business units	Global client orientation	Meta-teams facilitate teaming modes
• Core-team members have strong cultural and language knowledge • Core-team members adapt to different cultures • Core-team members mediate between local members	Cultural mediation	
• Escalate to different levels of team management to unblock obstacles (resources, product etc.) internally • Escalate to different levels of team management who can unblock obstacles at higher levels in the customer organization • Asking team for help in different countries • Team support to reduce isolation	Global problem-solving and support	
• Negotiating resource allocation for account • Maintaining resource allocation for account	Managing resource allocation	
• Core-team members build very close relationships with client headquarters • Extended-team members focus on local relationships	Fluid structuring	Fluid-teaming mode

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• Membership unstable in extended teams • Theoretically, membership clear for yearly allocation, but actually daily team membership unclear • Extended team attention dispersed among multiple accounts		
• Core-team members engage attention of multi-team members • Promote global vision for opportunity creation by disseminating strategic information to local representatives • Propose local opportunities worldwide • Horizontal information and best-practice sharing	Identifying opportunities	
• Constitution of trial teams • Unstable membership • Membership is unclear, which causes concerns regarding revenue • Focused attention	Viscous structuring	Viscous-teaming mode
• Core-team members build internal support for opportunity • Coordinating global resources for opportunity assessment	Assessing opportunity	
• Establishing a pursuit team • Stable membership • Multi-team members' attention focused on bids	Tight structuring	Tight-teaming mode
• Core-team members coordinate global resources for formal pursuit • Understanding different needs of the same customer in different countries • Getting help and information from locals to manage deal	Concretizing and pursuing opportunity	

Table 2

Summary of Data Sources

Formal interviews	Informants	Total interviews
Top management	10	12
Global account managers	20	34
Other managers[a]	10	10
Team members	20	21
Business support	4	4
Total	64	81

Observations	Occurrences
Site visits (9 countries, 3 continents)	13
Meetings attended	9
Team building and workshops	6
Social events attended (outings)	8
Shared meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner)	29
Shared transportation (plane, car)	4
Pages of field notes and memos	696
Informal interviews	11
Total days of observations	28

[a] Chief technology director, chief account specialist, regional account manager etc.

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Table 3

Sample of the Evolution of Interview Questions

Exploring global teams	Emerging concept: movement in teams	Refining concept: types of teaming in meta-teams
• Tell me the story of your team. • Who are the contributors in the team? • What is the history of this team? • Can you explain an incident or event that is indicative or representative of your team?	• If you are putting together a solution for a client, are there times when the solution changes? Do you have to bring in other contributors? (comparing how different teams morph over time) • Why do you say that your accounts are not the most important for extended-team members? When are extended-team members the most engaged? (comparing changes in attention over time) • You have multiple initiatives that you are working on. How do they differ, and do you organize them?	• Can you walk me though the process of an opportunity that is being implemented? What information is gathered? What resources are you gathering? When and how does that change along the life cycle of an idea? (clarifying the details of semi-fluid-teaming type) • Can you tell me the differences and similarities between running a temporary project and running the long-standing relationship with a client? Are there differences? (comparing the details of fluid teaming and tight teaming)

	(comparing different types of account teams from the perspective of a multi-team member)	

Figure 1

Framework for How Meta-Teams Facilitate Teaming to Get Global Work Done

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1
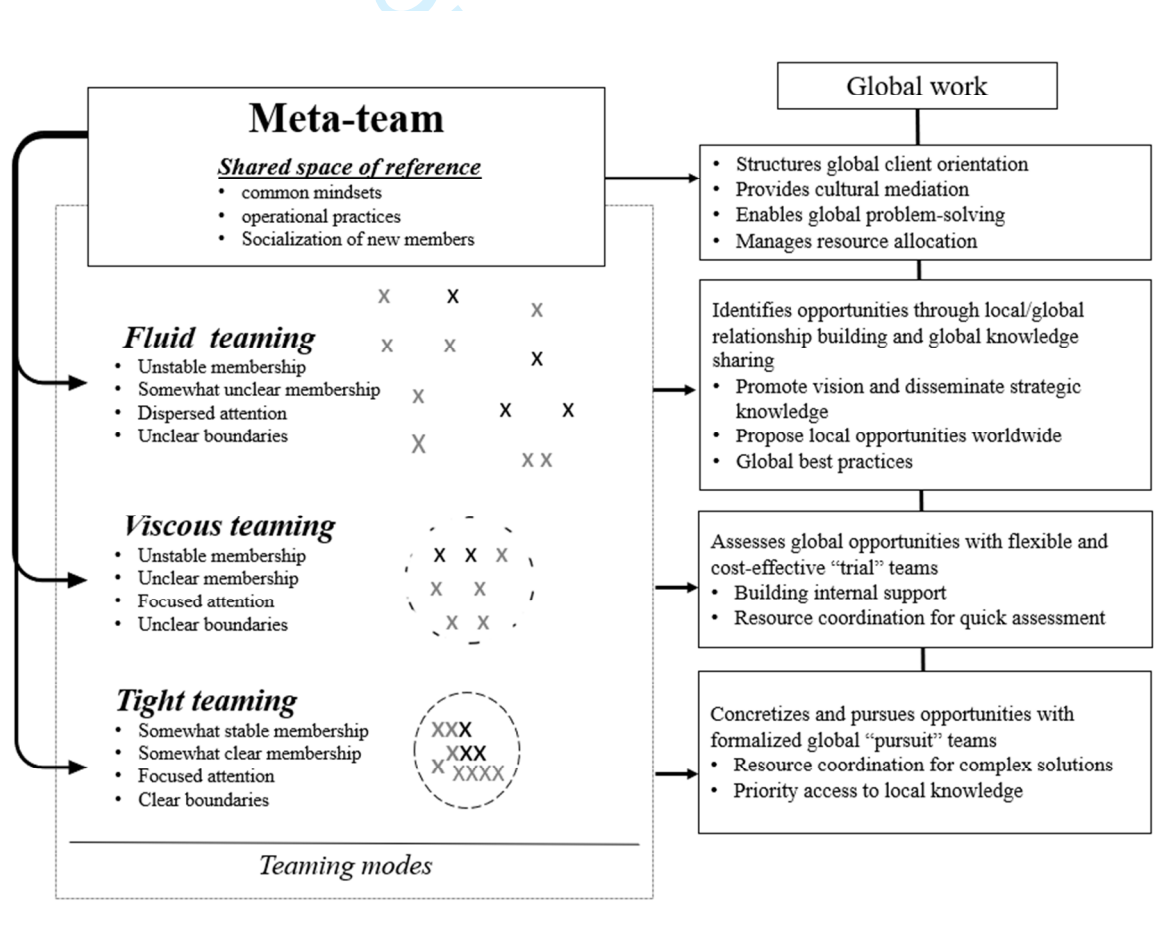
APPENDIX

Representative Quotations for Meta-Teams, Teaming, and Global Work

Aggregate dimension: Meta-teams are a shared space of reference

Second-order theme: Common mindset

First-order concepts	**Priority of accounts differ based on industry**	Silicon Valley in itself is very different [from other sites] and spending time here makes me see that. More focus on innovation – George mentions that even if [high-tech client] headquarters is in Germany, he stays in California, because he has to be close to innovation. *Observations, Book 4: 48*
	Multi-team members know how to act differently on different accounts	There is no one way to work with an account, because it changes. I have to adapt to the way the account team wants to work and also the level of maturity they already have. *Edward (strategic business development executive, global)*

Second-order theme: Operational practices

conceptsconcept	**Accounts have different control systems**	So, there is no general guidance, it's like everyone has to adapt their governance to their account at Computer. *Selig (regional sales director, Central/Eastern Europe)*
	Accounts have different rules	The requests are different because it's different customers for different business requirements. *Jacques (sales representative, France)*

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Second-order theme: Socializing new members

First-order concepts		
First-order concepts	**Sales representatives need to learn how to work on specific accounts**	**Meta-team role:** Let's assume that 99% of the time they don't get anything about [the client], but they know that there is a headquarter[s] in New York, they know that basic point, but they don't know [the client]. Then they will be happy to connect with you, make a call, potentially to welcome you in the country. What I like to do is, when I have a team, I like to travel and to meet with the team, do account planning, do account meetings, doing the go-between my customer and the team, setting up expectations, having a follow up plan, and so on. *Nicolas (global account manager)*
	Teaching team members how things work in the global account	I have to inform that team, which generally is new, what good looks like, and what bad looks like. *Rick (global account manager)*

Aggregate dimension: Meta-teams facilitate teaming modes

Second-order theme: Global client orientation

First-order concepts		
First-order concepts	**Ensuring a clear understanding of global vision and strategy across different countries**	My boss has done a very good job both in Asia-Pacific and in the States... There's a very clear understanding of our mission of what we want to achieve and, therefore, sometimes we don't even need to speak to each other. We know already that it's agreed and understood. *Louise (regional account manager, Europe)*
	Align communication to client across countries and business units	Most of my time I am talking. I am calling people to make sure we are aligned, same communication, same objectives to make sure we are in sync. *Paul (global account manager)*

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		Second-order theme: Cultural mediation
First-order concepts	**Core-team members have strong cultural and language knowledge**	National culture is a consideration all the time. Those of us who work and who have been used to working in global teams for many years now, you adapt to the national cultures, and that's about recognizing what's different… You need to make sure you spotted some of the national traits in the team that you're working on. *Edward (strategic business development executive, global)*
	Core-team members adapt to different cultures	So, we have Swiss team, but our client is in London, we have New York for Americans, and Singapore… These guys are different in culture and behavior, you have to motivate them differently and Danko is doing that. This is probably one of the success factors in the team… Understanding how to motivate them best, that's key. The empowerment is different from individual to individual and culture to culture. *Raphael (country account manager, Switzerland)*
	Core-team members mediate between local members	I understand what he's saying but the guy in the US, who gets this 'nasty' email from the French guy… well, he's not going to call him. He's going to ignore him and he's going to tell me he doesn't like him and he's horrible and he doesn't want to work with him… What I'll have to do is pick it up. I go to him [the French guy] and say, "Hey, he's going to read it this way." I have to know how the US guys are going to read it and I have to know what the French guy intended. *Darren (global account manager)*

Second-order theme: Global problem-solving and support

First-order concepts	**Escalate to different levels of team management to unblock obstacles internally**	An example would be a product that's committed for delivery. It's not appeared, and the local guy goes to his local manager for help. Local manager says "Don't ask me. Go talk to the agent." It's really a local supply issue. So [I] shout. Bully. Product might be in short supply, and the country wants to give it to the biggest customer. I only have one customer. My customer not getting his one box in his one country is equally important to me as getting everything to his largest customer. So… there's an escalation. *Rick (global account manager)*
	Escalate to	Manu did a great job because he has the contacts within client at the director's level or CEO

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different levels of team management who can unblock obstacles at higher levels in the customer organization	[chief executive officer] level and with those right contacts, he can make strategic negotiations, can address some concerns which we have in the local country. For instance, in the Netherlands, and address it on a higher level instead of making it a price competition in the Netherlands or in Germany or in Sweden. Carlos is extremely strong in talking to the right level in the organization like CEOs [chief executive officers] or CTOs [chief technical officers]. *Bram (product line manager, Netherlands)*	
Asking team for help in different countries	If it's too much for myself in a given period, then I try to seek help. Okay can I have, for example, our team in Bucharest help out or some local resources that can jump in… *Daan (presales representative, Netherlands)*	
Team support to reduce isolation	One of the problems with a virtual team can be identified as isolation and, therefore, not so much engagement. If someone's out in Asia-Pacific somewhere and he's a bit isolated, he may not feel as engaged on the team as he should be… Therefore, what you need is cohesion that can bring together all the different components. *Louise (regional account manager)*	

Second-order theme: Managing resource allocation

First-order concepts	**Negotiating resource allocation for account**	That's the first challenge. It's a perpetual, internal battle. I can show you now 55 demands of back and forth conversation of, "I want the seller guy in Zimbabwe." "No." "Okay, so can we get the seller guy doing Zimbabwe *and* Angola?" and so on. Having one consistent, stable coverage is the key part of the global account manager role. It's complicated, and it takes time. *Nicolas (global account manager)*
	Maintaining resource allocation for account	Each account general manager will have to say okay I'm going to sell this amount for this quarter. I have these projects, I have these difficulties. I don't have enough resources in that or this country. Not enough people to sell for me in Botswana, to give you an example, because these people are looking at the worldwide business. *Alina (regional business support coordinator Central/Eastern Europe)*
Aggregate dimension: Fluid-teaming mode		

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Second-order theme: Fluid structuring

First-order concepts	**Core-team members build very close relationships with client headquarters**	I spend Monday here. This week it's Tuesday, normally it's Monday. I spend the other four days at my customer. My own desk, my own office. I have access to every building, as my team does. They actually think I work for them. They think I work for [them]. Sometimes they have to pinch themselves, and say "You don't work for us, do you?" No, I work for Computer. That's how seamless that piece is. *Rick (global account manager)*
	Extended-team members focus on local relationships	My contact [client] is in France, if I have something to say to them or we have a discussion together, indeed what I say will mainly stay at local level. *Jacques (sales representative, France)*
	Membership unstable in extended teams	Of course, everything changes from one year to another, but there is a lot of movement so it's difficult to have a stable team. *Adelaide (regional account manager, Africa)*
	Theoretically, membership clear for yearly allocation, but actual daily team membership unclear	We always have to overcome, always negotiation, communication, no official visibility. For example, in my case [shows computer], this is my global team. One person is dedicated… other people are on the budget [extended] team, so you can see people are assigned [allocated]. But sometimes it's easy to change jobs (especially Chinese people or in Singapore people, it is easy to quit the job), and we get no information. *Takuma (global account manager)*
	Extended team attention dispersed among multiple accounts	People get assigned to too many accounts. So, I get a list of all the people that carry my client quota around the world and I call it the account density. You know, how many accounts do they carry other than mine. If the resource has more than ten accounts then, you know my expectation is they will have time for me only on a very limited basis. If the account density is less than ten or even less than five, then the expectations is that they will be focusing on my account adequately. *George (global account manager)*

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Second-order theme: Identifying opportunities

First-order concepts	**Core-team members engage attention of multi-team members**	Because their [extended-team members] incentive is to make their revenue with the clients, that they reach their personal targets. So, I do have a colleague in my team, he did very good business with his other customer, so his targets are reached and now he's the lazy guy with my customer. I always have to motivate him…. *Helmut (global account manager).*
	Promote global vision for opportunity creation by disseminating strategic information to local representatives	So, I see one important element in the leadership is to have a global view. So, it means to be close to the people in each country, to understand the local dynamic and to provide the local people on a regular basis with an update on what is happening on the account and also to help provide the right information for the team to know what is happening. I mean, you know, because lots of things are related. So, something we do in New York might impact or influence what is happening in Vienna or the people in Vienna can use these elements to nurture the discussions with the customer… I think it's one of the elements to pass as much information as possible for the team to have your elements to be strong in the market. *Adelaide (regional account manager, Africa)*
	Propose local opportunities worldwide	When we talked about how we can spread all their businesses globally, the revenue was focused on just the two countries, Germany and another. The question was why do we have all the business in the countries? We made a plan with BU [business unit] to improve the level of engagement in certain focused countries – Singapore, Japan, Brazil, and so on, the US – to get some business also in those countries. *Timotheus (global account manager)*
	Horizonal information and best-practice sharing	Best practices, it helps. At least for me because I'm in the job for two and a half years. It's not that long. It helped a lot to me. How to organize, how to build, make our business plan, for example. Also, how to engage with the BU [business unit]. Sometimes, when I walk into my client, it's a good door opener to tell a story about other clients in the industry. That's an important thing to share. *Timotheus (global account manager)*
Aggregate dimension: Viscous-teaming mode		

Second-order theme: Viscous structuring

Meta-teams: Getting global work done in MNEs

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<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4" style="writing-mode: vertical-lr">First-order concepts</td><td>Constitution of trial teams</td><td>Let's take an example of a deal we want, actually for the new platform out in the stores. I do that from the [core] team, because I have something called the business alignment meeting… Then we decide that with the client… Doesn't mean we get the business, but they know we have the discussion in their organization. Then I collect the team here who's affected. It's service sales, of course, it's consulting persons, how to set up the project, it's support people, how we support it, and whilst after we have rolled it out, I have to write levels [of] support in the stores. It's operations management. If we actually win, how should we roll it out? How should we integrate it into their purchasing platforms? And so on. It's a lot of different persons involved from… the account team. Lucas (global account manager)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unstable membership</td><td>You have to find the balance. What I do now is that I work pretty much based on what kind of opportunities I have and the BU [business unit]. From there I build different teams that change shape and resources all the time. Manu (global account manager)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Membership is unclear, which causes concerns regarding revenue</td><td>In the Swedish market, [the client] is a big account with big revenues. In Germany, it is a small account but has more revenues. Besides that, with the head in Sweden, many of these opportunities could be steered directly from Sweden and the influence from Germany could be nothing and the Netherlands as well, because if the decision is made in Sweden, that's it… I have to influence my team here, to tell them "This money will be taken in Sweden, but you will get revenue." Manu (global account manager)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Focused attention</td><td>There are some points in time where somebody will say to me, "I need you to do this. Stop what you're doing and just go and do this and do nothing but that." David (chief technical director, global)</td></tr>
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Meta-teams: Getting global work done in MNEs

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Second-order theme: Assessing opportunity

First-order concepts	**Core-team members build internal support for opportunity**	Some business units have only a few brilliant people that can make it happen. So, these people are really busy, they have ten plus accounts… An Indian guy who moved to India knew all the CIOs in the biggest car companies in India. But he couldn't accomplish things because he did not have the support or resources to go for the opportunities. *Dietrich (global account manager) in Observation, Book 3: 14-15*
	Coordinating global resources for opportunity assessment	If we're going to roll around 150,000 desktop devices to this company… Then you got to work out how you do that in [each] country. That size of deal, you got to have somebody globally leading that. They liaise with individual specific countries and those individual specific countries will work out what they need to deliver. *Bill (regional account manager, UK/Benelux)*

Aggregate dimension: Tight-teaming mode

Second-order theme: Tight structuring

First-order concepts	**Establishing a pursuit team**	We're going to have an RFP [request for proposal] … so my business line specialist is responsible just to tell me, okay, let's read the RFP and let's see what people we need… depending on what is in that RFP, on the content of the RFP. So, my specialist takes responsibility for this project, and tells me what other people we need in order to answer the RFP. *Elsa (global account manager)*
	Stable membership	Some of [the team members] are officially allocated part of their time, and that means that I can expect maybe 20-30% of their time. This is not, I would say, so strict. That's my role, to make sure, and get their attention that I can continue working and provide information that they could work on my project. But when we have a project on RFP to answer, they allocate the time. *Paul (global account manager)*
	Multi-team members' attention focused on bids	We just finished a major piece of work called Transform. We just put together 23 different initiatives [from businesses] across all of Computer, which is one of the best pieces of work I've ever submitted, really. We have about 80 people, around the world, doing this stuff for three weeks. And we submitted it last Saturday.

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	Interviewer: So, in three weeks, you get the people, and they work all night, whatever, to get it done. Because it's.... **Rick:** Yes, Because it's an interest. It's because all these salespeople can see an opportunity. *Rick (global account manager)*

Second-order theme: Concretizing and pursuing opportunity

	Core-team members coordinate global resources for formal pursuit	That means long days and long hours… The pool of people in the company, indeed in any company, that understand cloud end-to-end is actually quite small. More than that, the pool of people that can actually get things done when you're working across the EU is even smaller. *David (chief technical director, global)*
First-order concepts	**Understanding different needs of the same customer in different countries**	We were doing a migration for [our customer]. We signed a contract … Certain countries wouldn't, after we signed the contract, wouldn't allow data to leave their country. We were centrally housing the service in a number of our global data centers but not in the country. They say, "Well you can't do that because we don't allow our data, our information sit outside of our borders." That then means we potentially have to build an infrastructure in their country, additional costs that the customer didn't want to pay. You start getting into huge contractual difficulties… It's very complex… It's down to experience and knowing the customer, really, a lot of it. *Rick (global account manager)*
	Getting help and information from locals to manage deal	If it's a global project for the stores, it's a lot of people involved actually. Engaging initially here, just on the sales team and operations team, five to six… Then there's information and engagement out locally in each store or each country… Now there might be 40 different persons there as well. I communicate with the sales persons in locally countries and the consultant project usually handles the delivery mechanisms and the trainings and so on. *Lucas (global account manager)*