

# Social Engineering in Distributed Decision-Making Teams: Some Implications for Leadership at a Distance

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## OVERVIEW

One aspect of leadership is team management including the mobilization and deployment of members' task-relevant resources. Team management frequently involves social engineering, the activity of introducing planned interventions that are designed to change team structure and process—typically, the goal of increasing the quality of process and productivity (Stasser & Birchinger, 2003). In this chapter, we discuss ways in which electronic communication offers many possibilities for social engineering. We show that one can adjust their communication strategies and styles of interaction and explore some of the social engineering implications of this and other research on improving communication performance. Implications for leadership at a distance are then discussed.

When the team task is physical and the members have immediate feedback, then the team task is physical and the members have immediate feedback about each other's actions, management of team resources may be relatively simple. If the job is getting a couch from the third floor of a building to the first floor, the leader's job consists largely of getting the strongest members of the team focused on the task at the same time and providing benefits sufficient to justify the expenditure of effort and time. In contrast, when the team task is cognitive and feedback about what others are doing is

