

Leading From Anywhere: Developing Digital Leadership For Hybrid Organizations

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Abstract: In a rapidly evolving work environment mainly due to worldwide events like the COVID, 19 pandemic, companies have decided in a hurry to switch their work mode to hybrid work, models which means employees are allowed to work from home or in office as they wish and flexible working (Ebojoh & Högberg, 2024). This transition has put a question on the effectiveness of traditional leadership models which are based mostly on physical contact, hierarchical visibility, and direct oversight and which have been thrown a challenge by digital leadership which refers to the leadership ability to lead, influence and motivate the team that is spread across different geographical locations using the digital tools, virtual communication, and adaptive strategies and which has now become both an indispensable weapon and a source of the promotion for modern organizations (Nurhidayah & Muliansyah, 2024; Chamakiotis, Panteli & Davison, 2019).

This work comprehensively conceptualizes the idea of digital leadership within the scope of hybrid organizational structures. It also attempts to identify the core competencies, the potential, and the challenges of the same. Based on the theoretical resources, the paper presents the case studies from the organizations with high level of digital maturity and the concepts of organizational psychology and digital transformation to cogitate over the ways of leading "from anywhere" without losing productivity, cohesion, and employee engagement (Tannenbaum et al., 2021). The authors regard digital trust, creating, result, oriented performance management, open communication, emotional intelligence, and technological fluency as the crucial characteristics of successful leaders in the hybrid environment.

Also, the paper describes a spectrum of problems, which limit digital leadership development, such as digital exhaustion, the difference in equal accessibility to leadership opportunities of those who are working at home and those who are working in the office and attending the same meeting, and the unwillingness to accept the change in the culture of the organization. Simultaneously, the paper draws attention to the presence of these issues as the source of innovation, inclusion, and agility which are the benefits of the hybrid work format that can be achieved when effective leaders are leading (Boland et al., 2020; Harvard Business Review, 2021).

After combining all these reflections together, the article puts forward a feasible outline of digital leadership skill development which is designed for the hybrid organizations to ensure the stability and the capability to change in the face of the changing norms of the workplace. The research ends with the assertion that the promotion of digital leadership is not only a recourse to the challenges but rather a strategic move to organizational nimbleness and success in the long run in an economy which is increasingly inclined towards digital (first).

Keywords: Digital Leadership, Hybrid Work, Remote Leadership, Virtual Teams, Distributed Workforces, Workplace Flexibility.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

The work environment has been radically changed over ten years and this change has been majorly influenced by fast technological development and, a few months ago, by the worldwide COVID, 19 pandemic. Probably the most significant change is the emergence of hybrid work models in which workers balance home and office work time (Ebojoh & Högberg, 2024; Boland et al., 2020). Although telecommuting was only temporarily used to deal with the crisis, numerous organizations have made hybrid work the new normal in their operational strategies (Choudhury, Foroughi, & Larson, 2021).

The transformation they have faced changed the leadership styles that traditionally were based on direct, face, to, face supervision, more structured management, and clearer division of spaces. Unlike this, hybrid working teams operate in a very flexible, decentralized way and rely on digital instruments for communication, collaboration, and performance management. As a result, leadership should be transformed to solve the problems of the new world which means that leaders shift their work from hands, on control in a certain location to an ability to influence outside physical boundaries (Nurhidayah & Muliansyah, 2024). The term digital leadership thus represents both a strategic demand and a core competence of organizations leading through the challenges of hybrid work.

1.2 The Rise of Digital Leadership

Digital leadership is not just about technology adoption. It represents a wider range of skills, such as being tech, savvy, having high emotional intelligence, being agile, embracing inclusivity, and having the ability to gain trust in the virtual world (Chamakiotis, Panteli, & Davison, 2019; Tannenbaum et al., 2021). Leaders are required to energize, lead, and manage employees who may never meet in person, at the same time, ensure that the performance, engagement, and well, being are at a good level. The term "leading from anywhere" captures this shift: leadership that does not depend on location, is facilitated by digital means, and is based on a human, centered, trust, oriented approach (Harvard Business Review, 2021).

The thing that differentiates digital leadership in hybrid companies is the intricacy of managing two different working environments simultaneously. Leaders should worry about inequities that may arise between remote and in, office employees, solve communication problems that are caused by asynchronous workflows, and work on the cohesion of the team and company culture even though they cannot be physically together (Deskbird, 2023). In addition, digital leaders are responsible for the continuous innovation and adaptability of the teams that are frequently scattered in different time zones, different cultures, and have varying levels of digital access (Boland et al., 2020).

1.3 Research Problem and Objectives

Although hybrid work models are becoming more common, a considerable number of companies are still not ready to provide their leaders with the necessary tools for this new paradigm. Leadership training programs, performance metrics, and cultural frameworks are usually still based on traditional, in, office assumptions. The nature of work has changed drastically, but there is still a significant gap in leadership readiness to manage distributed teams effectively (Ebojoh & Högberg, 2024).

This study is intended to close that gap by identifying the core competences, issues, and strategies of digital leadership in hybrid organizations. The main objectives of the research are as follows:

- To define and conceptualize digital leadership in the context of hybrid work environments.
- Investigate the difficulties and discover the benefits of a leader managing a hybrid team.
- To integrate the best practices of academic research and the real, world of the case study.
- To set out a framework for the creation of digital leadership in hybrid organizations.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Comprehending and creating digital leadership skills is not just a theoretical idea, it can be traced through the figures of organizational performance, employee satisfaction, talent retention, and innovation capacity. The report of McKinsey & Company (Boland et al., 2020) reveals that organizations mastering remote leadership and digital collaboration have a considerable edge over their competitors in terms of employee engagement and business results.

In addition, digital leadership plays a vital role in creating brand new workplaces that are open and welcoming to everyone. Hybrid models may become the sources of inequalities, if improperly handled, or the facilitators of equal access to opportunities when the leadership style is based on inclusion (Chamakiotis et al., 2019). Leaders who have gone through the transition can make sure that employees both in the office and at home have power, are interested, and share the objectives of the organization.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions, Scope, and Theoretical Foundations

Several recent literature reviews collectively highlight that digital leadership (and related terms like e, leadership, virtual leadership) essentially indicate leadership behaviours, mindsets, and skills that are applicable in environments where digital technologies are at the core and teams are geographically dispersed, usually working remotely or in a hybrid manner. For instance, a systematic review of 74 studies from 2000 to 2022 revealed that digital leadership research is rapidly expanding; however, it is still in a maturing phase, with a significant focus on digital transformation, the use of ICTs, virtual teams, and creativity as the main themes. The authors of the study argued that leaders in such situations should not only have the technological skills but also the necessary human skills (communication, trust, motivation) and that these should complement each other rather than the latter being replaced by the former.

A further review by Lin (2024) of 53 academic articles was aimed at defining the characteristics of digital leadership. The paper recognized “vision motivation,” “digital empowerment,” “innovation and entrepreneurship,” “cross boundary collaboration,” and “dynamic adaptation” as the main traits. The reported facets included digital strategic thinking, digital insight, digital change, and talent development.

In their paper "Exploring Leadership in the Hybrid Workplace," Ebojoh & Högberg (2024) take a systematic approach to analyzing 48 research papers from various fields. They argue that a great number of studies have been done on e, leadership and remote work (mainly during and after the COVID 19 period), however, the issue of the hybrid workplace, structurally mixed remote and on, site work, has been relatively less explored.

Among others, Social Exchange Theory (emphasis on trust, reciprocity, relational dynamics), Job Demands Resources (JD R) (remote/hybrid work entails both demands, e.g. boundary management, digital overload, and resources, autonomy, flexibility), as well as research on digital transformation, organizational change, and leadership styles (transformational, authentic leadership) that are at the same time changed for virtual/hybrid environments, are the main theoretical sources cited.

2.2 Empirical Findings: Effects on Engagement, Trust, Productivity

Various empirical studies consistently indicate that digital leadership brings about favorable effects that can be quantified in hybrid setups or even a completely remote environment/hybrid. These effects are mainly facilitated through trust and communication.

- Nurhidayah & Muliansyah (2024) established that digital leadership is a major factor in employee engagement in hybrid systems. Their quantitative analysis (385 employees) revealed that trust in leadership and quality of digital communication are the main factors that partially mediate this relationship. The model explained close to 51% of variance in engagement, thus indicating a substantial explanatory power.
- A 2025 cross, cultural structural equation modeling (SEM) study (533 university employees) carried out in higher education contexts, showed that authentic leadership leads to higher digital productivity, by the effect of the leadership on digital capability and readiness. The major takeaway is that leaders' behavior is the key factor, not just the tools or policies.
- Several other studies agree on this point: leadership that is transformational (inspiring, engaging, empathetic) generally results in higher employee engagement of remote or hybrid workers which is to be contrasted with the leadership style which focuses on control or strict compliance. The poor communication, lack of interpersonal support, and over reliance on formal procedures are factors that lead to a decline of engagement.
- There is also empirical evidence that leaders' actions in a hybrid workplace influence not only psychological safety but also trust, and a sense of belonging. Remote workers frequently voice the opinion that they feel less visible, less connected, or that they are treated unequally unless leadership procedures explicitly ensure otherwise.

2.3 Key Components, Skills, and Competencies

From the literature, certain leadership attributes recur as important in hybrid/digital settings. These include:

Component / Skill	Description / Findings
Vision & Strategic Thinking	Leaders need a clear digital vision, an ability to see how work, technology, and collaboration can evolve, and to set direction under uncertainty.
Digital Fluency & Capability	Knowing how to use technologies, but also how to choose, adapt, and integrate digital tools—alongside preparing teams for digital work. In higher ed, capabilities like teaching-online, use of AI, etc., are highlighted.
Communication Excellence	Frequent, clear, appropriately synchronous/asynchronous; inclusive of remote participants; transparent, responsive; reducing misunderstandings due to lack of non-verbal cues.
Trust Building & Psychological Safety	Critical in hybrid settings. Trust is both outcome and enabler: employees need to trust leaders, but leaders also must design systems that maintain trust (fairness, visibility, accountability).
Empathy, Authentic Leadership	Leaders who show concern for individuals' circumstances, who are honest, ethical, supportive, and authentic tend to perform better in hybrid settings.
Adaptability, Dynamic / Flexible Leadership	As hybrid work means change (changes in technology, modalities, disruptions), leaders need to iterate, adapt, shift practices and policies.
Equity & Inclusion	Ensuring remote vs on-site employees are treated fairly: in visibility, opportunities, recognition. Leaders need to deliberately design against bias.

2.4 Challenges, Barriers, and Gaps Identified

While there is an increasingly rich literature, a range of challenges and gaps in research can be identified:

- **Uneven Visibility and Bias:** Employees working remotely or partially remotely may feel that their presence is less noticed, that they are less recognized, or that they are in some way disadvantaged in comparison to colleagues who work in the office unless leadership takes proactive steps.
- **Digital Fatigue, Burnout and Boundary Management:** The increase in digital interaction has led to the disappearance of the boundaries between work and life in some cases; the overload from digital meetings, asynchronous demands, and the expectation of "always being on" are very often reported. While some studies acknowledge these issues, there is a need for more empirical longitudinal evidence.

- **Resistance to Change & Organizational Inertia:** Cultural inertia, old habits (hierarchical, presence, based norms), lack of infrastructure or investment, and leadership gaps in terms of skills all hinder the transition to effective hybrid/digital leadership.
- **Context Specific Variations:** Differences between sectors (e.g., tech vs manufacturing vs education), geographical/cultural contexts, and different levels of digital infrastructure are areas that have not been deeply explored. What works in higher education may not be suitable for other domains.
- **Measurement Issues & Methodological Gaps:** The bulk of research is cross, sectional; there is a need for more longitudinal designs to track changes in digital leadership practices over time. Besides, there is inconsistency and sometimes a lack of agreement in the way "digital leadership" is defined or measured, which makes comparative studies challenging.
- **Underemphasis on Human / Ethical Dimensions:** Although technological tools and organizational change have been the focus of most studies, some literature suggests that human, centered issues, well, being, equity, psychological safety, require more attention.

3. Challenges and Opportunities

Hybrid work models, which blend remote and in, office setups, can be a source of major difficulties but at the same time a source of new opportunities for leaders. We delve into these deeply in this section, relying on recent empirical studies, practitioner reports, and theory.

3.1 Challenges

- **Communication Complexity and Misalignment**
The communication flows of the traditional hybrid work patterns often get disrupted. The leader's experience is that the impersonal verbal exchanges (hallway talk, spontaneous check, ins) become less frequent, and this can result in the break of informal knowledge sharing. The dependence on asynchronous tools may increase the number of instances of misunderstanding, and it becomes challenging to align across various time zones or places.
- **Difficulty in Building Trust and Psychological Safety**
When leaders and members of the team are not physically together, building the relational bonds that lead to trust requires more deliberate effort. The remote employees may even feel that they are not being seen, heard, or valued, and the small things that help to create inclusion and psychological safety may be overlooked. Besides, lack of visibility can reinforce uncertainties, thus, the so, called "trust deficits."
- **Unequal Experiences & Proximity Bias**
One of the frequently raised issues is that hybrid settings, more often than not, result in different experiences of remote vs. in, office workers. For instance, those who are more physically present may get more informal recognition, have easy access to mentors, or be more visible to leadership. The "proximity bias" thus not only erodes the concept of fairness but also can demotivate people.

- **Technological Overload, Tool Fatigue, and Infrastructure Gaps**

The employees working in hybrid mode are bound to several digital tools to perform their work, for meetings, collaboration, asynchronous work, file sharing, etc. They may suffer from tool overload or may not know which of the overlapping tools to use; this can bring them into a state of confusion, frequent context switching, inefficiency, and fatigue. Further, the technological infrastructure (bandwidth, hardware, security) may be of varying quality in different locations of the same company or among team members working remotely.

- **Maintaining Engagement & Team Cohesion**

It is a real challenge to keep team energy and morale high in a distributed manner. Without frequent in-person touchpoints, informal social interactions, and the spontaneity of collaboration, teams might experience being disconnected. Leaders have the challenge of nurturing belonging, sustaining culture, and keeping up the feeling of “we” among the dispersed employees.

- **Measuring Performance and Outcomes**

The old performance metrics regularly used are based on assumptions about presence, visibility, and direct supervision. These assumptions do not hold in hybrid conditions. Managers may find it difficult to redirect their evaluations from inputs (hours worked, visibility) to outputs (quality of work, results), a task that necessitates the overhaul of performance management systems as well as the establishment of clarity in regard to expectations and accountability.

- **Change Resistance, Cultural Inertia, and Leadership Capability Gaps**

Hybrid work requires changes in mindset from both leaders and employees. Resistance may come from managers who are used to supervise in-person; organizations with strict policies; or cultures which are more favorable to the visibility than to the flexibility. Besides, not every leader has the (technological, relational, adaptable) skills necessary for success in a hybrid environment.

3.2 Opportunities

- **Improved Flexibility, Work Life Balance, Well being**

Working models that are hybrid give employees the freedom to decide the place and time of their work which in turn may help to cut down the time spent on a daily commute, make personal planning more flexible and contribute to a better mood and well being (e.g. less stress, better sleep, etc.). For managers, this can be converted into a win situation of increased morale, decreased staff turnover, and stronger allegiance.

- **Broader Talent Pools and Increased Diversity**

If work is separated from location, the organizations will have access to talents that are not limited by geography. This enables hiring from various cultural, socio economic, and experiential backgrounds. Provided hybrid leadership is handled properly, it can use this diversity for the purpose of gaining new solutions, being innovative and having larger worldview.

- Potential for Higher Productivity and Innovation

Many studies point out that in cases when hybrid arrangements are implemented with careful consideration, productivity is maintained or even upgraded. The employees have the liberty to perform their work at the time when they are most efficient; also the remote work setting can lessen the fatigue caused by the daily journey to work. In addition, when teams are efficient in the use of collaboration tools, they can perform all the stages of a project from working through to finalizing and innovating in the virtual environment as well.

- Cost Savings and Operational Efficiency

Hybrid work patterns could be the reasons for the reduction of the fixed costs (smaller office footprints, less frequent commuting reimbursements, etc.). Additionally, the use of digital means can ease communication, reduce the need for travel and remove some location dependencies. These savings, in the long run, can be used for the revival of the company through infrastructure, training, or other capabilities.

- Accelerated Learning, Adaptation, and Organizational Agility

Businesses that decide to go for a hybrid work model are usually required to be innovative in order to find new ways of communication, coordination, culture, and leadership to be effective in different environments. Hence, this stimulates the trial of various approaches, the use of different tools and the establishment of feedback channels. Ultimately, this may lead to increased organizational agility, flexibility and preparedness for future disruptions.

- Inclusive Culture Potential

Should leaders be purposeful, hybrid work might be a means through which fairness is fostered: for example, employees who have limited mobility or are taking care of someone at home may find remote or flexible work more accessible. The arranged hybrid also enables people who come from different locations or cultural backgrounds to get more involved. Transparent communication, fair policies, and carefully planned inclusion practices can help the implementation of a hybrid work model become more inclusive than the traditional companies.

3.3 Synthesis: Balancing the Trade-Offs

While the possibilities are great, achieving them is dependent on the manner in which the challenges are tackled. Such as:

- Without established communication norms and adequate communication tools, flexibility may result in isolation instead of empowerment.
- In case performance metrics continue to be input, based, hybrid work may aggravate inequities instead of leveling them.
- In the absence of deliberate inclusion and culture work, bias due to proximity and invisibility may adversely affect engagement.

Therefore, digital leadership under hybrid conditions should not wait for the issues to arise but rather be proactive in creating systems and practices that alleviate the challenges and provide for the opportunities. The subsequent best practices and the development framework (in the following

sections) will have these understandings as their basis, indicating how leaders can shape their leadership to effectively use these trade offs.

4. Best Practices for Digital Leadership in Hybrid Organizations

4.1 Build a Culture of Trust and Psychological Safety

Trust, in hybrid organizations, is what makes performance possible. In a traditional office, where a leader can see the reaction of the employee and also approach him for a quick informal talk, the digital leadership is less visible and therefore it requires more trust.

Leaders should consider:

- Not controlling in detail but rather by setting clear expectations.
- Being consistent and fair in their treatment of employees who work remotely and those who come to the office.
- Inviting to conversation and, in fact, looking for employee suggestions.
- Meeting employee concerns warmly and, especially, when they are about workload, mental health, or digital burnout.

Psychological safety becomes even more important in hybrid teams, where, for instance, remote workers can think that they are forgotten or not valued. According to Tannenbaum et al. (2021) leaders have to create a setting where employees feel free to express their opinion, they can err, and dispute without getting punished.

4.2 Communicate with Clarity, Frequency, and Intentionality

Hybrid working brings about communication problems as the work schedules are asynchronous, time zones are different, and people rely too much on written communication. Digital leaders, therefore, need to over-communicate their messages to the employees, be very deliberate about it, pick the right communication channels, and make sure that the critical messages are understood by the recipients.

Some of the best practices are:

- Employing several communication means (e.g., video for subtlety, chat for speed, and email for recording).
- Keeping up the team meetings regularly with a definite agenda and facilitation that is open to everyone.
- Arranging virtual one-on-ones to strengthen personal bonds.
- Recording the decisions and giving the access to the shared knowledge for openness.

It is, however, just as important to create opportunities for the informal communication to take place, virtual coffee chats or check-ins can help to establish social connections that employees in physical offices have (Chamakiotis, Panteli & Davison, 2019).

4.3 Foster Equity and Inclusion Across Work Modes

Digital leaders need to actively fight proximity bias which is the inclination to give preference to those who are physically present. It is necessary to infuse fairness into hybrid systems so that employees working from any place can have equal access to opportunities, resources, and recognition.

Some of the initiatives that are recommended to be implemented are:

- Monitoring participation in meetings and decision, making to be sure that all voices are heard.
- Sharing the most, visibility projects equally between remote and in, office team members.
- Providing career development resources in an equally accessible manner e.g. mentorship, training, and coaching.
- Normalizing performance evaluations that concentrate on results rather than on location or visibility.

These inclusive measures create the conditions for members of a distributed team to feel a sense of belonging and to be engaged (Ebojoh & Högberg, 2024).

4.4 Lead by Example with Digital Fluency and Adaptability

In order to be respected, the leaders of digital transformation should not only be the ones who call for the use of technology but also show by their own example that they are the ones who effectively behave in the digital environment. In other words, they have to be collaborative with employees on platforms, comfortable to use project management or communication tools.

Some of the best practice methods can be:

- Showing skills in using main tools (e.g., Slack, Microsoft Teams, Trello, Zoom) that are available and being used by the team members.
- Supporting the use of digital hygiene, like following ones calendar, sending short messages and diminishing unnecessary meetings.
- Trying new tools and new ways of working and sharing openly with others if there is an issue of the learning curve.
- Motivating the rest of your team to develop more digital skills and removing the taboo of wanting to be helped in tech matters.

Being adaptable means also that you are able to recognize when to change strategies, stop using inefficient tools, and accept employee opinions about hybrid work dynamics (Nurhidayah & Muliansyah, 2024).

4.5 Encourage Autonomy While Aligning on Outcomes

One of the main features of a successful digital leader is the change from control to empowerment. Instead of calculating the physical presence or hours, efficient leaders set clear objectives, communicate common goals, and trust their employees to achieve results.

Key approaches:

- Use OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) or other outcome, based frameworks.
- Allow the teams to decide how they will work, you being there if they need help.
- Giving more attention to the time, roles, and expectations through which less ambiguity will exist.
- Concentrate more on coaching and mentoring, especially to support new or junior employees.

Such a leadership style increases the levels of motivation, accountability, and creativity, especially in autonomous work environments (Harvard Business Review, 2021).

4.6 Maintain and Reinforce Team Culture Deliberately

In Hybrid setups, culture does not develop naturally, it has to be deliberately cultivated. Digital leaders have the obligation to make sure that team values, norms, and rituals continue to live and be relevant even in the absence of everyday physical contact.

These practices are considered to be best:

- Having shared rituals like virtual team celebrations, onboarding ceremonies, or weekly wins.
- Supporting core values through meetings and communications.
- Making sure contributions are recognized publicly, no matter the location.
- Allowing peer, to, peer recognition, along with top, down praise, not giving by one only.

Continuous attempts to preserve team culture result in the strengthening of team identity, loyalty, and cooperation which can be seen even across the digital gap (Lin, 2024).

4.7 Invest in Leadership Development for the Hybrid Era

At the same time, companies should understand that one of the most important digital leadership skills is actually a skill which has to be learned rather than a natural talent. It is absolutely necessary to put money into leadership development programs specially designed for hybrid contexts.

Key areas of focus for training:

- Digital communication and collaboration skills
- Inclusive leadership and bias mitigation
- Leading through ambiguity and change
- Virtual team management and conflict resolution
- Mental health awareness and empathetic leadership

Those organizations, which are willing to invest in such development areas, have a great chance to keep the talent, raise the engagement level and be strong in the period of disruption (Boland et al., 2020).

5. Framework

As the hybrid work model becomes a norm in contemporary companies, there is a consistent rise in the need for leaders who are skilled in managing through digital channels. However, the majority of companies have not developed sufficient systems for recognizing, nurturing, and encouraging leaders who can excel in this novel setting. In order to close that gap, it is necessary to have a well, built and versatile model that would not only address the digital skills but also inclusivity, technological fluency, and leadership focused on people.

This part presents a detailed, comprehensive, and multi, faceted model for fostering digital leadership in hybrid organizations, its foundation being the current research, leadership theory, and organizational practice.

5.1 Core Pillars of the Framework

The framework revolves around the five fundamental areas of leadership capabilities that are vital for digital leadership in hybrid settings which are represented by five core pillars:

5.1.1. Digital Fluency and Tool Proficiency

In order to be a digital leader, one has to be adept in using various communication, project management, and collaboration tools. However, the most significant aspect is that they have to be able to strategically choose, integrate, and exploit the use of technology to yield productivity and customer engagement.

Key competencies:

- Being comfortable with Microsoft Teams, Slack, Zoom, Miro, Trello, and Asana.
- Having the capability to judge the efficiency of digital platforms.
- Following cybersecurity, data privacy, and digital ethics.

“Digital leadership is not about being the expert with every tool, it is about figuring out how to make other people efficient in digital spaces” (Lin, 2024).

5.1.2. Human, Centered Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

Concepts like empathy, adaptability, and active listening become even more vital in a hybrid context. Leaders are required to handle the challenges of a remote workforce while at the same time keep up the emotional bonding and create a feeling of safety.

Key competencies:

- Communicating with empathy and behaving inclusively.
- Regulating one’s own emotions during stressful or uncertain situations.
- Trust, building over distances and differences.
- Facilitating employee engagement and mental health.

Emotionally intelligent leaders who are able to identify and regulate their emotions have been found to create highly engaged and resilient teams even when working in a hybrid mode (Nurhidayah & Muliansyah, 2024).

5.1.3. Outcome, Oriented Thinking and Autonomy Empowerment

Most of the traditional leadership models depend on time, based supervision. Digital leadership, however, should be able to switch to outcome, based management, thus allowing individuals and groups to have more freedom to work in a way that is aligned with the set goals.

Key competencies:

- Using SMART or OKR frameworks for goal, setting.
- Handing over control and decision, making to others.
- Judging success based on the result rather than the time spent.
- Doing the work of self, directed and accountability.

”Digital leaders who operate efficiently determine the direction of their work, then leave, trusting their teams to deliver, ” (Harvard Business Review, 2021).

5.1.4. Communication and Collaboration Excellence

One of the tasks for digital leaders is the management of the flow of communication between different groups while at the same time they must ensure that the information is clear, accurate, and that everyone has equal access to it no matter what channels and time zones are used.

Key competencies:

- Deciding on the most suitable communication methods (e.g. synchronous or asynchronous).
- Conducting collaborative meetings and digital brainstorming in an inclusive manner.
- Writing decision and knowledge management.
- Inviting people to accept the cooperation and adhesion habits they have created.

Chamakiotis et al. (2019) stress the concept of “structured informality” which means creating digital venues for informal talk that contributes to social bonding and collaboration.

5.1.5. Equity, Inclusion, and Culture, Building

The sector of hybrid organizations is susceptible to the problem of deepening the gap of inequality unless the leaders are cautious with their inclusion efforts. The culture does not automatically transmit from one place to another, it has to be lovingly and deliberately cared for.

Key competencies:

- Creating fair mechanisms for getting noticed and career progression.
- Preventing proximity bias and ensuring the fairness of recognition.
- Implementing inclusive leadership strategies.
- Helping the shared culture through activities, signs, and storytelling.

According to Ebojoh & Högberg (2024), “The role of an inclusive digital leader is not something that can be added on, it is the very basis of fair hybrid workplaces.”

5.2 Developmental Stages of Digital Leadership

Leadership development is not instantaneous. The framework proposes a three-stage progression for growing digital leadership capacity:

Stage	Description	Goals
Awareness	Leaders recognize the shift to hybrid and digital-first environments, and the need to adapt.	Build digital self-awareness and openness to new practices.
Capability Building	Leaders develop core competencies through training, mentoring, and experiential learning.	Gain proficiency in tools, inclusive practices, and digital collaboration.
Integration	Leaders embed digital leadership into their daily behaviors and organizational culture.	Sustain adaptive, trust-based leadership in evolving hybrid contexts.

Training should be ongoing and context-specific, with opportunities for reflection, feedback, and peer learning.

5.3 Organizational Enablers

The framework requires organizations to back it up with various necessary facilities, policies, and a culture that raises and molds leaders in a hybrid environment. Those are:

- Leadership development programs that take into account the characteristics of digital environments.
- Mentorship and coaching networks concentrate on leadership in the hybrid model.
- The performance system is designed to reward digital and inclusive behaviors.
- Technology and learning resources should be provided not only for leaders but also for teams.
- Psychological support services and DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) initiatives.

Furthermore, the organizational structure should endorse the idea of leadership through the top executives, leaders must not only practice but also promote digital leadership principles publicly.

5.4 Example: Applying the Framework in Practice

A leadership development program might be designed through the use of this framework in a medium, sized company that is planning to move permanently towards a hybrid model of work:

- A digital maturity assessment to evaluate leadership capabilities of the current situation.
- A hybrid learning program that covers digital tools, inclusive leadership, and remote engagement strategies.
- A regular coaching session circle for peer, to, peer activities such as reflection.
- A scorecard that measures digital collaboration and outcome, based management.
- Leadership role models demonstrating empathy, adaptability, and innovation.

Leaders going through the framework will, after some time, be holding the highest engagement of employees, productivity of the team, and low turnover rates.

6. Discussion and Implications

6.1 Discussion: Interpreting the Evidence

- **Importance of Trust and Communication as Mediators**
Various empirical examinations (Nurhidayah & Muliansyah, 2024, e.g.) reveal that digital leadership has a tremendous positive impact on employee engagement in environments with hybrid work. However, most of this influence happens through trust in leadership and the quality of digital communication. Practically, it implies that the presence of good digital tools or infrastructure is not enough if leaders do not work on trust and communication. Then engagement and morale become victims.
- **Shifts in Work Life Integration and Well Being**
Hybrid work is a flexible work concept that many employees find useful as it gives them chances to minimize commuting, juggle personal and work commitments, and gain more control of work rhythm. Unfortunately, it also dissolves the line between work and home thus causing overwork, digital fatigue, and psychological problems. The sources proclaim that leaders should do everything possible to secure well being, establish clear boundaries, and be attentive to the emotional and mental health of their followers. The employee, focused MDPI research, among other things, accentuates that flexibility and emotional load were at the same time experienced by the employees.
- **Culture, Inclusion, and Equity Remain Central**
Remote or hybrid employees are reported by different studies to very often experience that they are less noticed, less recognized and may be worried of career growth. Proximity bias and unfair access to informal networks or being visible are the main culprits of the mentioned risks.

The example of Harvard style debates and practitioner reports may be cited here for pointing out the issue of equity when remote access is not equally available and when new leadership is indirectly favoring those who attend physically because they are there.

- **Leadership Capability Gaps and Role Evolution**

The change to hybrid work raises additionally the complexity of managerial roles. Leaders who were efficient in face, to, face interactions may now find themselves lacking skills and competencies necessary for digital mediation, culture preservation in the case of dispersed teams, or giving less direct control. Some studies (e.g. in workplace health or digital work research) suggest that managers feel overwhelmed themselves due to the fact that expectations are changing, the digital workload is increasing and they have sometimes less power to check or influence in a traditional manner.

- **Organizational Culture and Micro Experiences**

The culture covered by research in hybrid organizations is not the one taking for granted but the one that has to be deliberately created and supported. Culture is less related to the place or even daily physical rituals and more to shared values, symbolic work experiences, micro interactions, and contribution recognition ways. Gartner's framework ("Evolve Culture and Leadership for a Hybrid World") points out that employees experience more connection with and alignment to the culture when it is conveyed via everyday work, micro experiences, and leadership practices that are visible.

- **Digital Leadership and Organizational Agility**

"Digitally attuned" companies adapt to hybrid environments better. Leaders in such firms share that they have cohesive teams, positive views of culture, and enhanced flexibility. Conversely, organizations that are less prepared digitally find it harder to retain employees, maintain morale, and deliver under hybrid working conditions. This, in turn, evidences that there is a tight link between digital maturity and leadership success in distributed contexts.

6.2 Practical Implications for Leaders and Organizations

Based on the points argued above, the implications that a leader has to consider while designing leadership strategies, HR policies, or organizational practices in hybrid settings are as follows.

- **Prioritize Trust Building in Digital Environments**

Leaders should within their means dedicate time and energy in this regard to building trust based on credibility, reliability, and relational transparency. Strategies may include more frequent contact, explicit

signaling of appreciation, consistent follow through, and openness to feedback.

- **Design Clear Communication Protocols and Channels**

Organizations are expected to communicate norms to their employees through respective documents that clearly outline the mode and timing of the communication to be used. They should also set expectations around response times, meeting norms such as which persons participate, how are the voices heard, etc. Making decisions that revolve around documenting and giving access to information is very important.

- **Establish Well Being Safeguards**

The major challenge that comes with flexibility is burnout. Leaders should model healthy habits such as avoiding sending messages to employees after working hours, encouraging time off, and at the same time, monitoring the stress levels of employees. Furthermore, they should also provide necessary resources (counseling, mental health) mainly for those who are working remotely consecutively or those who feel alone.

- **Embed Equity and Inclusion into Hybrid Policies**

Policies should be primarily conceived as safeguards against proximity bias; hence, remote and in, office employees must be the only ones equally entitled to having access to opportunities, recognition, rewards, and advancement. The leadership development, mentoring, and visibility opportunities ought to be consciously redistributed.

- **Evolve Performance Management for Outcome Orientation**

Since presence can no longer be used as a reliable measure of productivity, the performance appraisal, reward, and goal, setting processes should be geared towards outputs, impact, and results rather than being based on presence or “being seen”. Leaders, therefore, should clarify expectations, metrics, deliverables, instead of hours or “being seen.”

- **Support Leadership Development and Digital Competence**

The use of training programs, coaching, peer learning, and experiential learning (for instance, role play, virtual mentoring) to quickly equip leaders with the necessary skills of hybrid leadership will be beneficial for organizations. These skills include digital communication, inclusive leadership, remote team management, adaptability, cultural awareness. Digital soft skills (communication, trust, adaptability) are just as important as technical or tool, based skills.

- **Foster Agile, Adaptive Culture**
The changes in technology, employee expectations, and work norms are happening very fast. Organizations, therefore, must be prepared to change constantly by evaluating what works, soliciting feedback, and if necessary, changing their direction. To be able to do this, the culture of an organization must be one of learning, flexibility, experimentation, and risk tolerance.
- **Prioritize Micro experiences and Cultural Connectivity**
Where large, scale rituals and shared physical space are less frequent, leaders ought to put their resources in small, frequent cultural moments such as team wins recognition, shared stories, rituals, virtual social touchpoints, peer interactions. These micro experiences facilitate connectedness and reinforce the organization's identity. According to Gartner research, connectedness is currently at a low level, and culture is in danger if this issue is not dealt with.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

- **Extension of Leadership Theory in Digital Contexts**
The results show that traditional leadership theories (e.g. transformational, authentic, transactional) when used for leadership in hybrid work have to be changed: aspects such as physical proximity, presence, and direct oversight become less visible, while trust building, communications, adaptability, and emotional intelligence get more weight.
- **Greater Relevance of Theories like Job Demands Resources, Social Exchange, and Leader Member Exchange (LMX)**
These concepts explain how digital leadership resources (autonomy, support, communication) become a cushion for the increased job demands (digital overload, boundary ambiguity). The mediating roles of trust and communication (as demonstrated in recent studies) correspond to the focus of Social Exchange Theory on reciprocity.
- **Need for Contextual and Cultural Sensitivity**
Hybrid work is different in each case: cultural norms, national settings, organizational history, and technology availability vary. What is effective in one location or industry may not be directly applicable. The models of the future should consider cultural intelligence, socio, technical infrastructures, and local work practices.
- **Longitudinal and Cross Comparative Research Needed**
Most of the existing research has a cross, sectional design. To get insight into the evolution of digital leadership practices, how they lead to long, term effects like retention, career progression, organizational

resilience, the number of longitudinal studies should be increased. Moreover, comparative studies among different industries and regions will facilitate the generalization of the findings.

6.4 Policy and HR Implications

For Human Resources departments, senior leadership, and policymakers within organizations, the evidence points to several things that need to be in place:

- Hybrid work policies must be formalized: definitely creating eligibility criteria, setting out the standards for behaviour, remote vs on, site work ratio, and giving tools/access to the employees.
- Equity audits to provide a clear picture of whether hybrid models unintentionally discriminate against certain groups (for example: disabled workers, caregivers, less digitally literate ones).
- The system for incentives and rewards needs to be consistent with the realities of hybrid work. As an illustration, one may promote the most contributing person (best quality of work, innovativeness, collaboration), instead of the one physically present.
- The provision of training and support to managers for the purpose of increasing their proficiency in the guidance of hybrid teams effectively.
- Technological infrastructure and support: reliable internet, suitable collaboration tools, cybersecurity, remote ergonomic supports.

6.5 Limitations and Cautions

Though hybrid and digital leadership offer quite a few attractive possibilities, a few reservations should always be considered:

- There is no universal model: The extent of hybrid models varies (the number of days working remotely vs in the office), and their effectiveness is very much dependent on the environment (type of work, culture, technology).
- Danger of excessive surveillance or work overload: Steps taken to ensure visibility of remote workers may result in close control or excessive monitoring, which leads to the erosion of trust.
- Digital divide: Some employees may not have stable connectivity, a quiet place for work, or sufficient access to tools thus, the problem of inequality may become even more serious.
- Exhaustion in the long run: The initial gain of flexibility or satisfaction may disappear; therefore, long, term well, being should always be checked.

7. Recommendations

The escalating intricacies of hybrid work environments necessitate a fundamental strategic reevaluation of both leadership development and leadership practice. Drawing on the insights derived from the present literature, best practices, and frameworks, this part of the book/resource details and actionably recommends the key stakeholders, thus senior leadership, human resources (HR), team managers, policymakers, and researchers, to whom these recommendations are addressed. These

recommendations have the ultimate goal of equipping organizations for a successful transition to the hybrid era through the nurturing of leaders who are digitally competent, inclusive, and resilient.

7.1 Recommendations for Senior Leaders and Executives

- **Craft a Long, Term Vision for Digital Leadership**
It is a big responsibility for the top executives to portray an unambiguous and convincing idea of how to digitally lead while it is a work strategy of the hybrid organization changing. Therefore, reevaluating the standards by which leadership success is measured, mapping the digital proficiency leaders at all levels should possess, and cementing these objectives through the company's mission and value statement are just some things to be done under this vision. Empathy, adaptability, and inclusiveness are among the qualities to be highlighted alongside the technical skills.
- **Lead by Example in Adopting Hybrid Practices**
Executives should demonstrate hybrid work, friendly practices to others in the organization. Examples of such practices are working hours being kept flexible, digitally collaborating being done through platforms, as well as a remote, communication, friendly etiquette. Middle managers and employees are equally influenced by the behavior of top management, which sets a standard. By indicating their readiness for hybrid work practices and the associated tools, they make it easy for digital leadership to become a part of the employees' routine throughout the organization.

7.2 Recommendations for Human Resources and Learning & Development (L&D)

- **Develop Tailored Digital Leadership Training Programs**
The HR and L&D staffs should be involved in the designing of well, structured training modules which build digital leadership skills. These programs ought to include topics such as virtual communication skills, managing distributed teams, performance management techniques in hybrid environments, inclusive decision, making, and digital wellness concepts. Training should not stop but rather continue through different leadership levels and should be experiential and different leadership levels, emerging, middle, and senior.
- **Redesign Performance Management Systems for Hybrid Teams**
Methods of performance assessment normally used in the past, e.g. the number of hours worked or office visibility, may totally lose the effectiveness when it comes to hybrid teams. An HR department ought to move in the direction of purely results, based evaluations that would be a source of motivation for innovative behavior, collaboration, and achieving results. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) may be focused

on the criteria of goals set, results achieved, team feedback, and leadership behavior rather than the mere physical presence.

- **Ensure Equal Access to Growth Opportunities**

Hybrid work poses major risks that remote employees become a "two, tier workforce", and as a result might experience limited access to mentoring, learning, and promotion. HR should work on career growth paths as if it were a proactive and fair audit. Remote, friendly mentorship programs, digital learning hubs, and inclusive leadership pipelines are the kinds of initiatives that can guarantee both equity and access for all employees, irrespective of their location.

7.3 Recommendations for Team Leaders and Middle Managers

- **Adopt Intentional and Inclusive Communication Practices**

Communication is one of the main features of effective digital leadership. Managers should implement communication measures that are not only clear, inclusive, and structured but also dry in a way to communicate transparency and accessibility to all members of the team. This is aimed at creating an easy flowing communication which could require setting up norms and rules for response times, communication tools, and balancing synchronous and asynchronous interaction. The virtual meeting should be a way to encourage discussion among all employees especially those working from home.

- **Empower Teams with Autonomy and Accountability**

If the group environment is mixed, micromanagement may not only be unfeasible but also non, productive. One of the ways through which a team leader can motivate his/her team is by showing them the expected results, providing the necessary resources and allowing them the freedom to decide the manner in which they achieve the set target. Empowerment increases the trust, inventiveness, and the feeling of being a part of the company that employees get.

- **Fostering a Digital, First Team Culture**

The main objective of managers is to not only build a sense of unit, belonging, and psychological security but also to maintain these aspects of the digital culture. In addition, they should interact with each other in informal ways, make small wins a habit and encourage the contributions of both remote and in, office workers equally. Cultural rituals like virtual bars, storytelling, and group check, ins not only enhance the core values but also the co, working of split teams can be reinforced by these activities.

7.4 Recommendations for Policymakers, Industry Bodies, and Ecosystem Partners

- **Establish National and Industry Standards for Hybrid Leadership**
The interaction between governments, industry associations, and academic institutions should see the establishment of national, level frameworks and competency models for digital leadership in the hybrid work environment. Those can become guidelines which not only cover ethical standards, but also include factors such as digital fluency benchmarks, mental health and well, being, equity considerations, and data governance to be implemented in remote settings.
- **Encourage Multi, Stakeholder Collaboration and Research**
Policy makers as well as industry bodies are expected to take the lead in establishing such platforms where knowledge is gained through sharing between the four sectors namely academia, business, startups, and nonprofits. Through regular forums, conferences, and collaborative research projects, the pace of learning and innovation in digital leadership can be accelerated. Besides, the cross, sector collaboration is crucial in fast, evolving domains such as AI integration, remote work policy, and digital skill, building.

7.5 Recommendations for Researchers and Academics

- **Conduct Longitudinal Studies on Hybrid Leadership Effectiveness**
Most of the currently available research on digital leadership is of short duration and reactive in nature. Subsequent studies should implement a longitudinal approach to investigate how digital leadership skills change over time and the eventual impact on long, term results such as employee retention, psychological well, being, career growth, and organizational resilience.
- **Consider Cultural, Sectoral and Regional Differences**
It is of the utmost importance to understand different ways in which digital leadership is implemented in various geographies, industries, and organizational cultures. For instance, leadership in a hospital that uses hybrid model may be very different from that of a software company. Culturally sensitive frameworks that take into account national values, workplace norms, and digital literacy levels are needed.
- **Examine the Impact of AI and Emerging Tech on Digital Leadership**
As artificial intelligence and automation continue to infiltrate leadership processes (e.g., performance tracking, sentiment analysis, productivity tools), researchers should be asking questions about the ethical, psychological, and organizational consequences of tech, assisted leadership in hybrid workplaces.

8. Conclusion

The transition to hybrid work models is more than just a logistical change, it is a fundamental shift of leadership, organizational culture, and the future of work itself. This investigation has focused on the rise and importance of digital leadership in hybrid organizations, illuminating the new demands that leaders face and the opportunities that come with leading in environments that are increasingly digital, distributed, and dynamic.

In the current hybrid environment, traditional leadership skills, like directive control or physical visibility, are no longer enough. Leaders, therefore, need to have a combination of digital fluency, emotional intelligence, ability to build trust, and inclusive thinking. They must be proficient in using technological platforms and, at the same time, be able to establish the human connection which may be broken due to physical and virtual separation. As employees become more geographically dispersed and digitally connected, leadership has to change from managing the presence of employees to managing the results, giving freedom to employees, and maintaining the company culture across various formats.

This paper has brought up the difficulties of hybrid leadership, such as communication barriers, proximity bias, digital fatigue, and potential inequities, that correspond with the opportunities it presents, including more flexibility, wider talent pool, and increased employee empowerment. It has been stated here that digital leadership, if it is developed in a deliberate and strategic way, can not only improve organizational performance but also contribute to employee well, being, engagement, and innovation.

The digital leadership development model proposed in this paper includes five key areas: (1) digital fluency and tool proficiency, (2) human, centered and emotionally intelligent leadership, (3) outcome, oriented thinking, (4) communication and collaboration excellence, and (5) inclusive and equitable culture building. Merged, these create a platform for leaders to be successful in hybrid contexts, combining technology with empathy, structure with flexibility, and visibility with trust.

Moreover, the negotiation of digital leadership skills is not only the problem of individual leaders. It should be backed by corporate systems, HR policies, learning and development initiatives, and executive leadership. Similarly, broad ecosystems like education, government, and industry networks have a role to play in setting the standards, creating the tools, and doing the research required for the continuous evolution and success of digital leadership.

To summarize, the capacity to "lead from anywhere" is no longer a matter of choice. It is the main characteristic of good leadership in the post, pandemic era. The organizations that will succeed the most are the ones that put money into the development of leaders who are able to motivate, connect, and deliver results across the virtual barrier, those who view hybrid work not as a limitation, but as an opportunity to restructure work for greater inclusiveness, agility, and human connection. As technology keeps on changing the workplace, leadership has to stay focused on its mission, be trust, driven, and be able to bring together people regardless of where they are. Hence, digital leadership is not only a competency but also a strategic leverage for the future of work.

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