

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN REMOTE WORKING

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ABSTRACT

This study underscores the pivotal role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in remote leadership, stressing its significance in fostering positive professional relationships, enhancing conflict resolution, and maintaining emotional balance—essential for effective remote team management. It highlights the need to adapt traditional leadership skills for remote environments, emphasizing clearer communication, enhancing empathy, and engagement strategies without face-to-face interaction. Task-oriented leadership is reinforced by electronic communication, which clarifies task and goal assignments, crucial when information exchange is limited. Relational-oriented leadership excels in virtual settings, providing autonomy and support, though the lack of physical presence can weaken socio-emotional bonds. Change-oriented leadership, such as transformational leadership, produces mixed results in virtual settings. While the absence of social cues can lessen its impact, it may also improve team cohesion by highlighting broader social identities. Electronic communication, while potentially leading to misunderstandings and reduced socio-emotional contact, also enables quick and spontaneous connections, beneficial for maintaining support.

The paper further underscores the necessity of organizational support and continuous learning for leadership development in remote work contexts. Promoting a culture of continuous learning and leveraging technology in training are crucial for developing leaders who can drive innovation and productivity in a digital landscape.

KEYWORDS: *challenges, communication, development, digital landscape, leadership, intelligence, productivity.*

DOI: [10.24818/IMC/2024/02.02](https://doi.org/10.24818/IMC/2024/02.02)

1. INTRODUCTION

As working from home becomes the norm, the way we drive is changing dramatically. This paper aims to analyse how leadership evolves in the context of teleworking, highlighting both the difficulties and the advantages of this new working style.

Traditionally, leadership was based on personal interactions, but now it must adjust to a reality where online communication and remote collaboration are essential. The shift to remote work has called into question the ability of leaders to motivate and support their teams without being physically present. This context requires reconsidering classic leadership methods and looking for new strategies to cultivate effective leadership skills in the virtual environment.

This analysis recognises that remote work is not a temporary solution, but a sustainable transformation for many global organisations. Thus, training leaders capable of managing remote teams is crucial. By reviewing the literature, case studies and empirical data, this paper aims to identify best practices for developing leaders in a digital context.

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This study focuses on fundamental aspects such as communication skills, emotional intelligence, technological knowledge, and flexibility, vital for remote driving.

Another objective of the paper is to underline the importance of support from organizations for leadership development programs adapted to remote work. Further, to highlight the fact that promoting a culture oriented towards continuous learning and the use of technology in the training of leaders are key elements for the success of this process.

In conclusion, analysing the above, it is obvious that the evolution of teleworking redefines the framework for leadership development.

By embracing these changes and understanding their consequences, organizations can develop leaders who are not only prepared to lead remotely, but also to drive innovation and productivity in an increasingly digitized context.

2. EMOTIONAL IMPACT

2.1 The neuroscience of emotions

Daniel Goleman (2000) described how emotional balance depends on an act of neural balancing between signals from two major areas of the brain. The prefrontal zone, located just behind the forehead - the executive centre of the brain - the centre of planning, decisions, learning and cognition. A major corridor in the brain circuitry connects the executive area with the emotion centre, which are located lower in the midbrain.

The key among the emotional centre is the amygdala, which is part of the brain's safety or threat scanning system. During an emotional hijacking, the executive area stops planning, understanding, deciding, or learning.

Cognitive neuroscience finds that when we face such moments, our ability to process information gets stuck. The more difficult we are in a situation, the less we can focus on what matters and respond effectively or simply make the best decision. More, this executive paralysis spreads. Within any group, it is natural to pay the most attention and importance to what the most powerful person says or does. Leaders spread their feelings on those around them, for better or for worse.

Kohlrieser et al. (2012) has studied more than a thousand top executives – company executives and board members. He found that the best has a common ability: they remain calm in crisis situations, managing their own emotions, which creates an aura of safety among those around them. They do not spread fear, anger, or tension.

There are ways to strengthen your emotional balance. One of them is to take advantage of the gap between momentum and action. When the amygdala sends that signal of anger or panic to the executive centre, you have a window to manage well or not. It takes self-awareness, the foundation of emotional balance, to take control. With practice, the body and mind can manage to calm down instead of exploding, reducing the number of diversions.

The neuroscience of emotions reveals how leaders utilize emotional intelligence. Neural networks, including the amygdala and prefrontal cortex, shape decision-making and empathy. Integrating this knowledge can enhance leadership efficacy, fostering environments where emotional resonance drives collective success and innovation. This frontier holds transformative potential for leadership dynamics.

2.2 Emotional assertiveness in leadership

John Parr (MSc) developed this logical model (The Emotional Assertiveness Model) in the late 1990s, starting from the observation of his clients. He studied the functions of emotions and logical thinking in problem solving, especially in personal and professional relationships. He observed two defence mechanisms that most people use in their daily lives and that, when used in excess, lead to blockages in achieving the goal. One mechanism is that of defence through excessive logical thinking, and the

other is that of defence through excessive emotionality. The model explains the function of emotions and provides tools for application in various situations, including leadership.

In his model, John Parr (2022) explains the concept of emotional assertiveness and its profound impact on our personal and interpersonal dynamics. It explains in a logical manner how recognizing the four fundamental emotions (happiness, anger, sadness, and fear) of the messages conveyed by them, can help us develop our level of self-knowledge to communicate authentically and effectively. The concepts developed in this model in the four dimensions of emotional assertiveness (self-knowledge, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management) support the development of an organizational culture based on trust and cooperation, as detailed below.

Emotional assertiveness also involves setting boundaries to facilitate healthy cooperation, encourage the pursuit of win/win results, and build healthy and effective relationships. This aspect is of major importance in leadership, as it facilitates effective negotiation, establishing healthy relationships in the workplace, and increases the level of trust in the organization and the team. Emotional assertiveness promotes the expression of a person's authentic emotions with the aim of strengthening and deepening cooperation. As such, it is an essential component for the development of healthy teams and organizations.

Active listening is the basis of emotional assertiveness, facilitating the identification and expression of our own emotions, but also the identification and validation of the emotions of others. By listening carefully and empathetically, we demonstrate compassion, create a space for effective dialogue.

Emotional assertiveness cultivates emotional intelligence. The model proposed by John Parr is based on empathy, but also on the recognition and understanding of one's own emotions. By developing emotional assertiveness, a leader improves their ability to manage conflicts assertively. This direct way of solving through open communication, encourages trust and intimacy in the organization and the team (Shankman, 2015).

In conclusion, emotional assertiveness is the basis of healthy relationships. By cultivating emotional assertiveness, we develop skills to express emotions assertively and authentically, favouring the development of leadership skills.

2.3 Emotional intelligence impact in leadership

Emotional intelligence in leadership has become a central theme in management and organizational psychology studies, reflecting the importance of emotional skills in effective team leadership. In this paper, we will explore various aspects of emotional intelligence in the context of leadership, highlighting its impact on organizational performance and the personal development of the leader and team members.

The concept of emotional intelligence, introduced by Daniel Goleman (2011), refers to the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and those of others to guide behaviour and make decisions effectively.

A leader with high emotional intelligence is aware of their emotions and those around them, which allows to effectively navigate complex and unpredictable situations. Awareness of one's own emotions is a fundamental component of emotional intelligence in leadership, providing the leader with a solid foundation for self-reflection and self-regulation. Empathy, or the ability to understand and feel the emotions of others, is an essential skill in leadership based on emotional intelligence, facilitating effective communication and the development of trusting relationships in the team.

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In conclusion, assertiveness and emotional intelligence play a vital role in effective leadership,

contributing to organizational success and the personal and professional development of the leader and team members. It is essential for leaders to understand and harness the power of emotional intelligence in their efforts to guide and inspire others towards excellence and the achievement of common goals.

3. THE PERSPECTIVE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP DURING REMOTE WORKING

3.1 Traditional leadership, from concept to values and principles

Initially, leadership research focused on identifying specific leadership traits. The idea, less accepted by experts, that leaders are innate, not formed, persists. Common characteristics in leaders include self-confidence, extraversion, and the ability to capture the attention of others. Leadership can be defined both as a practice or process of influencing and guiding people through non-authoritarian methods, and as a group of people performing various functions. In an analysis of the attributes of a leader, J. Adair explains the difference between the concepts of leading (leading) and managing (administering), emphasizing that leadership implies the existence of a direction or orientation. The term "leading" comes from an Old Anglo-Saxon word, common in northern European languages, which refers to the route, road, or direction for a ship. This perspective is like that offered by J. Stoner and F Freeman, who define leadership as the process by which the activities of group members are directed and influenced.

Since the characteristic traits of leaders are not enlightening in the study of leadership, researchers have tried to study the behavioural characteristics of effective leaders.

Ken Blanchard, the father of management, known for his "One Minute Manager" series, and Paul Hersey created a model for Situational Leadership in the late 1960s that allows analysing the needs of the situation that any leader faces, and then adopting the most appropriate leadership style. It is worth mentioning that this model is simple to understand and works in most environments and for most people. The model does not apply only to people in management or management, it can also have applicability in personal life.

So, there are 4 types of leadership styles, as follows:

- Telling – Leaders define the roles of the individual or group.
- While the leader still provides direction, he or she now uses two-way communication and provides social-emotional support to "sell" his or her message to attract people to the team.
- Participating – The leader shares the decision-making process on aspects of how the task is accomplished, and the leader provides fewer task-related behaviours while maintaining high relationship behaviour.
- Delegating – The leader is still involved in decisions; However, process and responsibility were passed on to the individual or group. Leaders remain involved to monitor progress.

Practice has shown that no one trait is common to all effective leaders, and no behavioural style is effective in every situation.

Considering this approach, effective leadership is influenced by the following variables:

- Leaders' personality, experience, and perspectives
- The perspectives and behaviour of superiors, leaders generally seek to model themselves after their superiors who otherwise share rewards and power.
- The tasks required and to be fulfilled by the leader.
- The perspectives and behaviour of their counterparts, primarily within the organization, but also outside
- Characteristics, prospects, and behaviour of subordinates
- Organization culture.

In terms of management differences between individuals and collectives, the team is the goal of any method of managing a collective.

Several people working, as a single individual – this is, of course, a desideratum that must be proposed in the activity of any trainer. Andrew Carnegie "surrounded himself with successful people, an ideal practice for success. He once said, "No one can be a great leader if he does everything alone or if he assumes full success" (Dornan, 1999).

The success of motivation programs therefore aims at the satisfaction created by the work in the position occupied by the employee. Measuring this satisfaction offered by occupying the position by the employee can be done through different procedures; one of the simplest is that of performance assurance (Panisoara & Panisoara, 2010).

One tool, entitled the Job Descriptive Index (JDI), was developed by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin by cataloguing five facets of the job: work itself, supervision, pay, promotion, and co-workers.

The success of any individual or team is determined by the leader's ability to lead, and by the type of management chosen. The different results obtained by similar companies in terms of typology and endowment are due to the way managers think and act, the type of manager and the management style practiced. Managers or leaders possess in different proportions the knowledge, skills, and qualities necessary to exercise in good conditions the functions of management or to fulfil their specific roles. Every manager adopts a certain way of leading or exercising leadership, which is reflected in the way they interact with subordinates, colleagues, or superiors. In these times, leadership was based on well-defined hierarchies, with decisions made at the higher level and implemented at the lower levels. At the same time, for any leader it is important to ask a series of questions regarding team administration, performance evaluation, delegation, and the power to motivate.

Next, the paper presents a framework for "Leading Effectively," featuring a series of questions that every leader should ask themselves.

Table 1. Efficient leadership

Lead Your People	Praise good performance, manage underperformance	Encourage your people to learn and grow
Ensure your people understand what they need to do to deliver	How do I monitor performance?	How do I pass on my skills and knowledge?
Do they understand the task?	Do I tackle difficult issues?	What do I do to help my people to learn new things?
Do they know when they need to complete it by?	Do I say well done straight away?	How do I encourage my teams to learn and grow?
Do they have the skills to do it?	Do I coach people to get better?	
What does good look like?	Do I flex my style according to the individual?	

Source: Penny Blake, 2000

In conclusion, early recognition of these challenges and barriers allows leaders to develop effective strategies to overcome them. It is important for leaders to be proactive, open to continuous change, and prepared to adjust course when necessary.

3.2 Inspiring leadership in remote work

A leader is essentially a person who inspires others to act. These individuals gain the right to influence not through coercion, but through the force and impact of their ideas. They understand that inspiring others is essential to ensure their long-term commitment. Thus, the way leaders communicate is essential, giving them the opportunity to express and share their visions for others to adopt and follow.

In conclusion, the way leaders express themselves includes the words and phrases they use to spark inspiration among others.

Leadership does not depend on having a certain title, level of education, a large team under someone's command, or charismatic behaviour. Rather, it is about the ability to develop and communicate visions that inspire others to follow and act. At its core, effective leadership revolves around the power to influence others, with trust being the cornerstone of any form of influence. Without trust, it is impossible to influence someone. Therefore, a manager must prioritize building trust between colleagues and team members. It involves presenting two fundamental aspects of trust: competence and character. Competence doesn't require you to be an expert in every facet of teamwork, but it does involve having enough understanding to make informed decisions and a willingness to seek information where knowledge may be lacking. Character involves making decisions based on values that transcend personal gain and truly investing in the well-being of work and the team. When people are convinced of a leader's competence and character, they will put their trust in him and act accordingly.

A leader's responsibility includes building an authentic team and leading their collective effort. A truly effective team is unified by a common and strong goal and common values. Within such a team, the connections between members are so strong that they share a collective belief in their mutual success or failure, understanding that an individual's victory is meaningless if the team does not triumph. Beyond purpose and values, cohesive teams establish norms of collaboration: both verbal and unspoken agreements on how they interact. This includes determining acceptable forms of conflict and boundaries that should not be exceeded. Skilled leaders ensure that all the critical components for building an authentic team are present: purpose, values, and guidelines, and then guide the team accordingly. Therefore, instead of commanding with "Do it because I'm in charge", they inspire action with "Do it for the team", using a much more convincing tactic.

Starting from these premises, we will explore the implications of remote work through the prism of leadership, given that adapting to this new work environment requires not only organizational changes, but also a redefinition of the way leaders exert their influence.

In the context of remote work, traditional leadership skills need to be adjusted to meet the needs of a geographically dispersed team. This involves clearer communication, increased empathy, and the ability to keep team members engaged, even in the absence of face-to-face interactions.

A key aspect of remote leadership is the effective use of technology to create an inclusive and accessible work environment for all team members.

Leaders need to be proactive in adopting digital tools that facilitate collaboration and ensure that all team members feel comfortable using them. In addition, establishing a culture based on trust becomes crucial. In a remote environment where direct supervision is limited, leaders need to rely more on trust and clearly defined goals, rather than monitoring daily activities. This requires a delicate balance between providing employees with the necessary autonomy and maintaining an appropriate level of accountability.

In addition to these challenges, leaders need to be aware of the risks of social isolation for their team members and look for creative ways to foster a sense of group belonging and cohesion, even from a distance. Holding regular virtual meetings, informal social media sessions, or online team-building activities can help maintain personal connections between colleagues.

Leadership in the context of remote work requires continuous adaptation and innovative thinking to successfully navigate the complexity of this dynamic environment.

By cultivating a strong organizational culture based on open communication, mutual trust, and constant support, leaders can ensure not only the productivity of their team but also the overall well-being of its members in the digital age.

Before Covid-19, most companies offered minimal flexibility in the workplace, but this has changed. Many companies have firmly set themselves the goal of flexible work arrangements that can

significantly increase employee productivity and satisfaction. This will require managers to consider the challenge from four distinct perspectives: (1) jobs and tasks, (2) employee preferences, (3) projects and workflows, and (4) inclusion and fairness.

Working in the 9-to-5 office was the norm, with companies allowing limited flexibility in where or when employees worked. The pandemic has changed this model as managers recognize that many employees can work productively anywhere and anytime.

A study by the Gensler Research Institute, "The Hybrid Future of Work", Gensler U.S. Workplace Survey 2020, conducted against the backdrop of the pandemic, shows that full-time employees working from home experienced a 37% decrease in average collaboration time (GRI, 2020).

Leaders rightly focus on fostering collaboration, and as a result, Steelcase research, "Real Questions, Real Answers About Hybrid Work", shows that nearly two-thirds of leaders want to increase spaces for both in-person and hybrid forms of collaboration (Cavazos, 2021).

TALENT ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT:

The increasing volume and sophistication of digital projects have made it significantly harder to attract and keep technology professionals. Therefore, leaders must pay more attention to this critical aspect of guiding digital transformation efforts.

CYBER SECURITY AND DATA PRIVACY:

While digital tools enhance empowerment and improve efficiency, they also bring about worries regarding potential cyberattacks and data breaches. Therefore, cybersecurity and data protection are crucial elements of leadership in navigating digital transformation.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT:

Digital transformation involves weaving digital technology throughout every facet of a company's activities. As a result, it naturally triggers major shifts in how things are done and managed. If these changes aren't carefully overseen, they can quickly become disruptive and adversely impact the organization's productivity.



CUSTOMERS CENTRICITY:

When developing and implementing a digital strategy, it's crucial for business executives to prioritize their customers and end-users above all else. Their actions should ultimately aim at achieving objectives that are centered around the customer—meeting their requirements, providing improved experiences, and offering more significant value.

Figure 1. Leadership in Remote Working

Source: Author Research

3.3 Do managers must prioritize empathy in a hybrid world?

The implications of how Covid-19 has changed the way people will work from now on are becoming clear. Empathy is nothing new. It's a common term in the psychology of good leadership, but it hasn't yet been a top management priority. The empathetic manager is someone who can contextualize performance and behaviour.

Empathy emphasizes many facets of moral judgment and action. There is evidence that people's level of empathy corresponds to their moral judgments. (Goleman, 1995).

Empathy requires developing a high level of trust and care and a culture of acceptance within teams. In a 2021 Gartner HR Research survey of 4,787 corporate employees, 85% of mid-sized HR leaders agreed that it's more important for managers to show empathy these days than it was before the pandemic. What's more, Gartner's analysis shows that managers who display a high level of empathy have a threefold greater impact on their employees' performance than those who display low levels of empathy.

Another study by the Gartner, "Think Hybrid Work Doesn't Work? The Data Disagrees", 2021, shows that employees in organizations with a high level of empathy-based management are more than twice likely to agree that their work environment is inclusive (Waller, 2022).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The study emphasizes the critical role of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in remote leadership, underscoring its importance in fostering positive professional relationships, enhancing conflict resolution, and maintaining emotional balance—all essential for managing remote teams effectively. Traditional leadership skills must be adapted for remote environments, requiring clearer communication, increased empathy, and strategies to engage team members without face-to-face interaction. Remote communication strengthens task-oriented leadership by ensuring clear task and goal assignments, crucial when information exchange is limited. Relational-oriented leadership is effective in virtual settings by providing more autonomy and support, though it can weaken socio-emotional bonds without in-person interaction. Transformational leadership, a form of change-oriented leadership, achieves varied results in virtual environments, where the lack of social cues is offset by the potential for stronger team cohesion.

Despite potential misunderstandings and reduced socio-emotional contact, electronic communication allows for quick, spontaneous connections. Effective use of technology is vital for creating an inclusive and accessible work environment. The study also highlights the importance of organizational support and continuous learning for leadership development in remote settings.

Promoting a culture of continuous learning and leveraging technology in training is essential for developing leaders. The shift to remote work, reliance on technology for collaboration are reshaping managerial roles. Understanding employees' feelings now takes precedence over merely tracking activities. The hybrid workplace offers flexibility, reduced carbon footprint, cost savings, and higher job satisfaction, while retaining benefits like collaboration, networking, cultural assimilation, creativity, and direct cooperation from traditional office settings. Employees must remain visible to their leaders and have access to necessary resources, while managers must oversee their teams' activities and ensure tool access. Managers in physical spaces are more attuned to their teams' tasks and performance, but remote management poses visibility challenges. The primary challenge in hybrid setups is maintaining accuracy, addressed through thorough follow-ups, clear communication, continuous education, and vigilant monitoring (Harvard Business Review, 2022).

Promoting team autonomy in remote work is crucial, with clearly defined responsibilities and key performance indicators (KPIs) established to monitor progress and success. Leadership involves inspiring and encouraging others to overcome challenges, accept change, achieve goals and building strong teams. Managers must motivate employees to be fully engaged and create positive, appreciative work environments to boost productivity and work quality (Tracy, 2013). Approaching employees in a motivational manner is vital, with a significant difference between being a Leader and a Boss (Branson, 2013). Building on the conclusions of this paper, the study aims to further explore the impact of influence within the new remote work leadership style.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study was conducted as part of a doctoral program at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania.

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