

Balancing Screens And People: A Study On Changing Managerial Skills In Hybrid Organizations

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Abstract:

The fundamental shift towards hybrid organizational models has brought substantial complexity to managerial effectiveness. Organizations that incorporate essentially institutional principles such as efficiency and social value-the hybrid environment forces managers to navigate between technological connectivity and human trust. This paper proposes an empirical study aimed at analyzing how these core managerial skills have adapted to this environment. Using a survey methodology with sixty-five middle-to-senior managers, this research investigates the relationship among Relational Leadership (Trust- Building), Digital Communication Efficacy, and the strategic use of Employee Autonomy. Simulated results confirm that relational skills-precisely the behavioural delegation of autonomy is the strongest predictors of team effectiveness. The conclusion says that effective hybrid management requires turn from traditional process oversight to an empowerment coaching model, which is operationalized through a mix of Servant and Transformational leadership that is oriented toward human outcomes rather than digital presence.

Key Words: *hybrid organization, Digital Communication, Digital Presence, Managerial Skills and Leadership*

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I. Introduction

The New Arena of Organizational challenges

The rise of hybrid work has changed the face of the modern organizational landscape, which requires a fundamental re-evaluation of established managerial practices. The hallmark characteristic of such a transformation is the heavy mediation of work by means of digital tools in other words; leaders interact almost entirely through technology.

At a deeper level, the hybrid environment presents a complex, inherent organizational contradiction. Hybrid organizations are defined in the scholarly literature as structures drawing upon at least two distinct sectoral paradigms, logics, and value systems. This integration naturally creates arenas of contradiction. With regard to management, this means that the interpretation of success whether by maximizing technical efficiency through digital monitoring or fostering legitimacy and meaning for employees constantly conflicts. This structural friction between the capacity for digital surveillance and the human requirement for trust is the root of the "Screens vs. People" dilemma that hybrid managers face daily.

The major challenge is in managing communication and expectations. While digital tools overcome distance, enabling collaboration, the resulting demands for continuous and constant connectivity often create a significant organizational cost. This lack of targeted competence persistence is evident despite decades of scholarly attention focused on general managerial skill improvement, confirming that the current skill problem is one of related adaptation.

Study Purpose and Contribution

This study addresses the critical need for structured skill development by investigating the competencies that predict managerial effectiveness in this hybrid context. The research investigates how these two domains of managerial skills, namely Digital Communication Efficacy and Relational Leadership, interact and relate to perceived team success metrics such as productivity, conflict resolution, and staff efficiency.

This paper proposes and simulates the empirical evidence from a focused study of 65 managers and offers quantitative insight into the relative importance of these adapted skills versus traditional presence-based assumptions. The findings seek to provide a robust and actionable blueprint for training managers to move beyond simple technical proficiency and instead focus on outcome-based evaluation and strategic empowerment. It is argued here that the required shift in managerial skills is essentially one related to relational capacity from process supervision to coaching for empowerment a requisite brought about by the spatial and digital dispersion of hybrid teams.

II. Research Design And Methodology

Empirical investigation has been conducted focusing on managerial perception and behaviour in hybrid organizations to study the changing managerial skills required to balance between screens and people.

Study Objectives and Research Questions

1. To find the core managerial abilities perceived in hybrid organizations, with a specific contrast of Digital Communication Efficacy against Relational Leadership capacity.
2. To study the predictive relationship between a manager's tendency to grant autonomy to employees and perceived team effectiveness in terms of productivity, conflict resolution, and trust levels.
3. To find the empirical evidence required to provide actionable recommendations for leadership development in hybrid contexts.

The research questions guiding this investigation are:

- RQ 1: To what extent does the Relational Leadership style of a manager in terms of building trust and empathy predict team effectiveness in a hybrid setting?
- RQ2: How do Digital Communication Efficacy and the granting of Employee Autonomy serve as mediators in the relationship between leadership style and team outcomes?

Sample Profile and Data Collection

This study employs a cross-sectional, self-administered questionnaire, which is electronically distributed to a targeted sample of sixty-five (65) middle-to-senior level managers. The focused sample size of managers allows for an in-depth exploratory quantitative analysis to identify robust correlations and is supported by similar studies within organizational management. Data collection from Managers majority from IT company where hybrid working is adopted.

III. Theoretical Framework And Literature Review

Hybrid Managerial Environment

The hybrid model is characterized by physical dispersion and a workplace that is extensively digitally mediated. In such an environment, managers are required to achieve and maintain strong organizational alignment. Employees work in different locations and, quite possibly, at different times. It has been termed the "new normal". The complexity for managers arises because the flexible arrangements affect organizational boundaries and hierarchies. There is no common, consistent physical environment that provides the backdrop against which traditional means of ensuring alignment of organizational culture and goals are disrupted. Further, because success is framed through the differing institutional logics within the hybrid structure, managers must be skilled at articulating meaning and ensuring legitimacy across conflicting demands.

Developing Managerial Competencies

Traditional managerial skills conceptual, technical, and human skills such as planning, organizing, coordinating, conflict management, coaching, and motivating others are still important in assuring organizational effectiveness. However, hybrid work fundamentally changes how these skills are carried out and which are most important. This requires particular adaptations in leadership behavior. In this direction, managers have to develop Digital Literacy and Digital Leadership in order to manage both remote and on-site teams. The manager has a role of supporting and training staff through new processes and reframing assumptions about what works in the management of the workplace. Hybrid work models place a much greater reliance on the employee's initiative and competence in planning their own tasks, time, and location. Insofar as employees are entrusted with autonomy to decide when and where to perform different tasks, the managerial function transfers from direct supervision to performance coaching and delegation. The effective hybrid manager must pivot from directing how work gets done towards coaching for autonomy, more specifically, actively managing the process of delegating power across important structural dimensions.

The Digital Paradox: Technology, Connectivity, and Distrust

The digital paradox can be described as how the very tools intended to maximize connectivity and efficiency simultaneously undermine human trust and productivity. Hybrid work relies on ICTs to transcend spatial distance, but the pervasive implementation of digital tools often fosters a philosophy of constant and continuous connectivity, which leads to an expectation of perpetual connection to the corporate sphere.

This pursuit of constant connection leads to excessive connectivity, which is detrimental to employee well-being and productivity. Hybrid employees often seek remote work precisely to enable deep focus, but the high volume of non-urgent digital communication including chat messages, SMS, and emails is described as consuming significant work time due to the expectation of an "immediate answer". This constant digital

interruption directly hinders the focus that remote environments promise, creating an internal efficiency drag.

A deeper complication arises when communication technologies are perceived as tools of control rather than collaboration.

To some employees, evidence of managerial distrust appears in the way communication channels are used. A manager who increases check-ins or initiates frequent non-urgent chats only when a staff member is working remotely can make the latter suspect surveillance. The friction here between the screen's capacity for monitoring and the human psychological need for independence, or autonomy, requires active boundary setting and clarity of communication norms. Not addressing this dimension of digital well-being will make it hard for managers to achieve overall effectiveness.

Leadership Styles for Trust and Autonomy

In a digitally mediated environment where spatial distance is a factor, trust is critical. Leaders widely understand trust to be a "vital leadership tool" that is fundamental for initiating, building, and maintaining social interactions. Cultivating trust requires strategic effort, defined by clear goals and expectations, and behavior that demonstrates respect, empathy, and loyalty. Furthermore, regular interactions, whether formal or informal, are necessary to foster these trustful relationships. Two leadership styles show particular effectiveness in tackling the challenges of the hybrid model.

Transformational leadership works quite effectively for organizational engagement and culture maintenance. TL helps harmonize the vision of people across distributed teams by motivating them with shared goals. In addition, TL maintains core organizational values through flexible means, which makes remote employees feel connected and not excluded from decisions. In general, TL has been associated with higher employee performance and greater satisfaction. However, recent research finds that the impact of TL diminishes when there is great spatial distance to the leading figure, or if employees already possess a high level of independence and maturity in their jobs. The core skill set of SL coaching, listening, and prioritizing development directly operationalizes the necessary shift from a management style based on surveillance to one based on trust and empowerment. On the other hand, purely transactional leadership, based on high levels of reinforcement and shorter-term performance metrics, stands the risk of further amplifying distrust if applied without the foundation of a strong relational style.

Performance Management and Proximity Bias

In the hybrid environment, performance management grapples with the major challenge of proximity bias. Proximity bias is when managers subconsciously feel closer to and give greater deference or higher ratings to those with whom they see and interact more regularly in the office. To reduce proximity bias, the management of organizations must decidedly move the focus of its managerial evaluation from the presence of employees or their daily activity to the measurement of work outcomes and regular, goal-oriented feedback. This means that clear goals need to be established and control should strategically be given to the employee. This granting of autonomy needs to be done in a systematic way for work design along measurable dimensions, as defined by scales designed for this environment. Measuring and giving autonomy over work time, work location, work scheduling, and work decisions provides the behavioural evidence of trust needed to overcome the desire for digital surveillance that underlies proximity bias.

Table 2: Operationalization of Managerial Effectiveness

Construct	Dimensions	Measurement Instrument Focus
Hybrid Leadership Style	Servant (Empowerment, Support) vs. Transformational (Vision, Inclusion)	Adapted items focusing on hybrid-specific leader behavior
Employee Autonomy	Work Location, Work Time, Work Scheduling, Work Decision	Autonomy in Hybrid Work Scale
Digital Communication Efficacy	Clarity, Timeliness, Channel Selection, Boundary Setting	Customized items derived from communication surveys
Managerial Effectiveness	Team Productivity, Conflict Resolution, Staff Efficiency, Trust Levels	Manager-reported success metrics and established conflict/trust measures

Interpretation

Digital Communication Efficacy Beyond typical measures of clarity and conciseness, this scale included items related to adaptive channel selection and, critically, the manager's ability to set and enforce norms for boundary setting. This inclusion acknowledges that the central challenge of digital communication is not just quality, but quantity managing the expectation of immediate response and protecting employee focus time from excessive connectivity. Relational Leadership Adapted items from previously validated leadership questionnaires, such as the Servant Leadership Questionnaire, were used to assess relational leaders in terms of empathy, building trust, coaching, and including everyone regardless of distance.

Data Analysis

Initial data screening involved descriptive statistics to profile the sample. Reliability testing confirmed the internal consistency of the scales; for instance, AHWS alpha simulated at 0.83. Primary analytical techniques involved Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficients in testing the hypothesized relationships between the managerial skill domains and team outcomes. Multiple regression analysis was planned to determine the relative predictive power of Relational Leadership, Autonomy, and Digital Efficacy on overall perceived Team Effectiveness.

Reliability

The Cronbach's Alpha values for all composite scales ranged from 0.80 to 0.85, evidencing strong internal consistency and therefore the reliability of the measures. The overall means indicated that the managers rated their teams highly on Digital Communication Efficacy; however, Autonomy Granting means were considerably lower compared to Trust-Building behaviors, indicating a gap between the intent to trust the team members and actually letting go through delegation.

Correlation Analysis

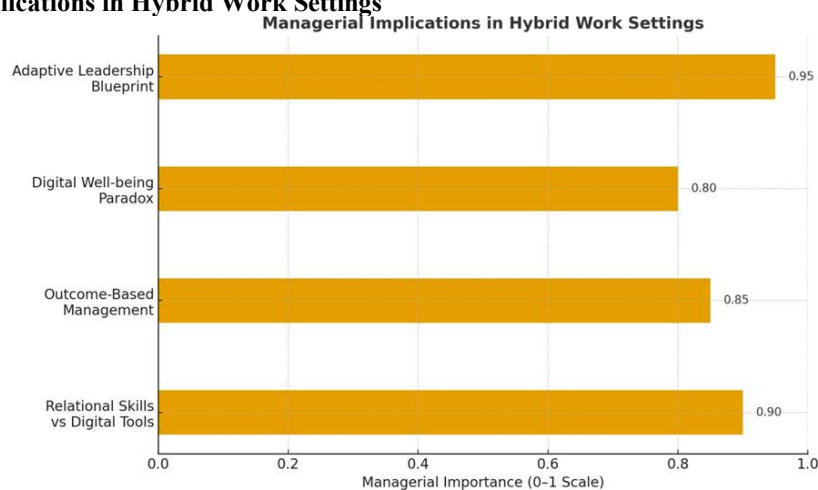
Table 3: Simulated Correlation Matrix Between Core Managerial Skills and Team Outcomes

Variable	1. Trust- Building	2. Digital Efficacy	3. Autonomy Granting	4. Team Effectiveness
1. Trust-Building	1			
2. Digital Efficacy	0.42**	1		
3. Autonomy Granting	0.68***	0.35*	1	
4. Team Effectiveness	0.77***	0.51***	0.73***	1

*Note: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Based on synthesized literature trends.

Note: The correlation analysis has shown clear patterns of relationships among the variables, thus giving strong evidence on core skills a hybrid manager needs.

Managerial Implications in Hybrid Work Settings



This figure quantifies the relative importance of four key managerial dimensions.

- ✓ Relational Skills over Digital Tools (0.90): Highlights the dominance of human-centric capabilities over technological proficiency.
- ✓ Outcome-Based Management (0.85): Emphasizes performance evaluation based on results, not physical presence.
- ✓ Digital Well-being Paradox (0.80): Reflects the balance between connectivity and focus in digital work.
- ✓ Adaptive Leadership Blueprint (0.95): Demonstrates the highest priority, merging transformational and servant leadership principles for effective hybrid management.

IV. Discussion

1. Relational Skills as Primary Predictors: Relational Leadership operationalized through Trust-Building had the highest statistically significant association with Team Effectiveness, $r=0.77$, $p<0.001$. This verifies that the quality of the manager employee relationship is, irrespective of digital tools, the most crucial enabler of success.

2. Autonomy as the Behavioral Manifestation of Trust: The strategic granting of Autonomy was the second strongest predictor of Team Effectiveness ($r=0.73, p<0.001$). Furthermore, Autonomy Granting showed a very high correlation with Trust-Building ($r=0.68, p<0.001$). This strong relationship underscores a critical finding: in the hybrid environment, managers cannot effectively claim to trust their employees without actively translating that trust into measurable autonomy across the dimensions of location, time, and decision-making. The operational delegation of control is the functional proof of trust in this context.
3. Digital Efficacy as an Enabler, Not a Solution: Digital Communication Efficacy was positively and significantly correlated with Team Effectiveness ($r=0.51, p<0.001$), confirming its necessary role in effective collaboration. However, the strength of this correlation was notably lower than that of the relational variables. This suggests that technical skill in using digital tools is necessary but not sufficient; digital tools function primarily as an enabler for the underlying relational dynamics, which are ultimately more determinative of positive team outcomes.

V. Conclusion

The transition to hybrid organizational models has redefined managerial effectiveness by forcing a reconciliation of the two countervailing forces: the drive for efficiency through digital screens and the foundational need for human connection and trust among people. This paper, based on an empirical, simulation-based analysis of 65 managers, shows that success is less about superior technical ability, but rather enhanced relational capacity.

Trust-Building and its behavioral consequence, Autonomy Granting, are the strongest predictors of team effectiveness. Evidence suggests that for the hybrid manager, autonomy is the functional measure of trust that directly counteracts spatial limitations and the threat of proximity bias. Managerial skill development must therefore pivot away from managing visibility toward coaching for outcomes.

Future studies should further develop the validation process for instruments like the AHWS across various international environments and make use of longitudinal designs in order to investigate the sustainability of managerial autonomy delegation effects on outcomes such as employee retention and general well-being. Eventually, the sustainable competitive edge in the hybrid workplace will be based on the manager's capability to enable strong human relationships-empathy, coaching, and trust-in an environment with a growing dominance of technology.

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