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Collaboration, Culture, and Creativity in the New Workplace

There is no going back to the pre-pandemic workplace. Instead, organizations and individuals have the opportunity to discover new ways of working while maintaining the building blocks for a collaborative and creative team.

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Collaboration, Culture, and Creativity in the New Workplace

[OFFICE OF THE FUTURE]

Redesigning the Post-Pandemic Workplace

Work as we know it is forever changed by COVID-19. Now is the time for managers to envision the office that employees will return to.

BY GERALD C. KANE, RICH NANDA, ANH PHILLIPS, AND JONATHAN COPULSKY

The world has experienced widespread disruption over the past year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the successful development and distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine, the timeline for when the so-called next normal will arrive is clearer. Leaders should begin to take steps to consider what the workplace will look like when it arrives.

There is no going back to the prepandemic workplace. Organizations and individuals have had no choice but to discover new ways of working. Many have reported successfully implementing years' worth of digital transformation plans over the course of a few months. For example, mortgage loan company Freddie Mac implemented remote building inspection, and many health care providers pivoted rapidly to telemedicine. Even companies that needed to maintain a significant colocated workplace used digital innovations to improve employee and customer engagement and

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safety. For example, Hitachi adapted sensors to monitor social distancing in factories, and many restaurants quickly adopted virtual ordering and delivery services. Managers should begin asking themselves how they can build on such innovations to further transform their businesses instead of planning a return to ways of working that were becoming outdated and obsolete even before the pandemic.

The pandemic is not the only disruption we have experienced in the past year. It has also been a time of political divisiveness, social unrest driven by racial inequality, and ongoing digital disruption, to name but a few. In our forthcoming book, *The Transformation Myth: Leading Your Organization Through Uncertain Times*, we argue that the end of the pandemic will almost certainly not mean an end to disruption. Over the next few months, leaders would be well served by taking the opportunity to learn how to apply the innovations and advances implemented in recent months and developing an approach for ongoing workplace reinvention that is more resilient to all types of disruption.

Maximize the Benefits of Both Remote and Colocated Work

The anticipated gradual return to colocated work in the coming months provides opportunities to experiment with hybrid ways of working. Returning to the office strategically, by focusing first on the activities best performed in person and, in the process, evaluating the effectiveness of both remote and colocated work, gives managers the ability to critically consider the ways in which a hybrid workplace might be more effective.

The pandemic taught us that remote work can be highly effective — to a degree. Employees are often more productive when they don't have to spend time on a daily commute. Meetings may be more frequent but tend to be shorter. Virtual work also allows people to collaborate across geographic, physical, and organizational boundaries

in novel ways. But our recent research has shown us that the past few months of widespread remote working have also had some significant drawbacks. Our interviews with over 50 executives between April and November 2020 about their experience of leading their organizations through the pandemic uncovered challenges in the following areas:

• **INNOVATION.** Although remote collaboration among colleagues who regularly engaged with one another worked well, serendipitous connections with others dropped off precipitously. Research has shown that these weak ties are often critically important to innovation and knowledge sharing in organizations.

• **STARTING NEW PROJECTS.** Remote work had little impact on workers' ability to finish big group projects that were already underway. Relying on virtual collaboration to initiate new projects, however, was an order of magnitude more difficult in terms of challenges and

stressors. This finding underscores the value of remote work but raises questions about relying on it exclusively for a long-term workplace strategy.

• **CULTURE.** Several people we interviewed said that establishing and maintaining organizational culture is difficult, if not impossible, in a virtual setting. Many of the cues to organizational culture that the physical workplace provides, such as the design of the office and how people dress, disappear with virtual work. The lack of a strong sense of culture is a particularly acute problem with respect to onboarding new hires.

• **MENTORING AND COACHING.** Employees, particularly younger ones, received less mentoring and coaching during the shift to remote work than they did before the pandemic. If people don't get the feedback they need to develop into more mature employees and leaders, this deficiency could negatively affect career development over time.

Leaders should spend the next few months planning how to combine the best aspects of remote and colocated work. Ben Waber, president of the workplace analytics company Humanyze, shared with us early data from Asia that suggests that a little co-location can go a long way toward reducing the limitations of remote work. Employees who returned to the office only one or two days per week increased the number of serendipitous connections by about 25%, Waber said. Yet we also expect that decisions about balancing remote and colocated work will affect, and be affected by, a broader set of factors, such as school reopenings and public transportation load, which have also been affected by the pandemic.

Leaders should consider the following as they envision the reinvented workplace:

Enabling flexibility in usage. The pandemic has underscored the importance of organizational nimbleness, and organizations can design physical workplaces to support it. Office furniture manufacturer Steelcase is now developing product lines designed for on-the-fly adaptation, according to Sara Armbruster, the company's vice president of strategy, research, and digital transformation. Different office configurations could be employed depending on whether a group is brainstorming, hosting a workshop, or conducting a daily stand-up meeting.

However, managers will need to be mindful of employee preferences as they rethink how a space is configured. Janet Pogue McLaurin of architecture and design company Gensler told us that 61% of U.S. employees still want a dedicated desk in the workplace, even if it means they need to come to the office more often. This number may change as the pandemic wanes, but managers might consider ways to create a sense of employee ownership of personal space amid this flexibility or to establish a temporary sense of ownership through a booking or reservation system.

It also may be that office space configurations change seasonally, perhaps with decreased workplace density during winter months to promote employee health. For example, the health insurer Humana took advantage of mild weather in Louisville, Kentucky, and created pop-up outdoor offices in partnership with local parks to provide safer workspaces during COVID-19. The company brought in tents, socially distanced work areas, Wi-Fi, restrooms, and food trucks to allow small numbers of employees to work together in safer ways. The company may explore whether these outdoor pop-up workplaces have additional benefits and retain them as a part of its workplace strategy for the future.

Continuing to evolve virtual work. Organizations should continue to experiment with virtual work amid the gradual return to the workplace. First, most people have been working virtually for less than a year. While that amount of time seems substantial, it is unlikely that employers have discovered the full range of opportunities that virtual work provides during that period. For example, many companies are just beginning to explore the possible benefits of more advanced asynchronous collaboration tools, and they are only scratching the surface on the myriad ways to leverage the data generated by digital collaboration to improve workplace performance.

Second, the nature of virtual work will change when organizations can combine it with colocated work. Rather than needing to perform all work remotely, organizations can begin to explore more deeply the processes and practices that can evolve virtual work to optimize organizational benefits. For example, the pandemic uncovered important deficiencies with how companies previously used digital tools. Several interviewees who were long-term remote workers reported feeling more included once everyone else on a team was also remote. Meetings in which some participants are physically present together while others are remote may be worse than either exclusively colocated or purely virtual meetings. Managers who continue to run hybrid meetings should experiment with new ways to promote inclusion of remote participants.

Digitally supporting colocated work. If people have the option to work from home, it seems likely that they will use this time to engage either in individual focused work or in remote meetings. When employees decide to make the effort to come into the office, it will be to engage in the types of tasks that require in-person interactions. Digital tools can help maximize in-person interactions by identifying who will be in the office at the same time. These apps could begin to incorporate more advanced recommendation features, suggesting new connections using organizational network analysis among those also at the office. This increased digitalization and analytics can also help improve organizational knowledge flows.

While digital tools create opportunities to work in new ways, organizations should also

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look further into the future and consider how these tools might be applied to support changes in employee behavior as work is automated. Managers also must continue to rethink how they manage performance as more employees adopt a hybrid model with both remote and colocated work.

Discovering Workplace, Workforce, and Work

Rethinking the workplace also opens up new opportunities for rethinking the workforce and, ultimately, work itself. When your organization is not limited to a colocated workplace, the idea of whom you can include in the *workforce* expands. For example, many Silicon Valley companies have indicated that they are able to hire more-diverse employees when their potential talent pool is not limited to those who want to live in the San Francisco Bay Area. It also creates opportunities for rethinking work itself by creating new ways to integrate automation and analytics to digitally transform many aspects of work.

The workplace, workforce, and work of the future will be fundamentally different as a result of the pandemic. The gradual emergence from this disruption provides an unprecedented opportunity to explore and experiment. Leaders must learn to continually reinvent the future of work, and now is the time to begin discovering how to bring that future about.

Gerald C. Kane is a professor of information systems and the faculty director of the Edmund H. Shea Jr. Center for Entrepreneurship at Boston College. Rich Nanda leads Monitor Deloitte and the U.S. Strategy Offering for Deloitte Consulting. Anh Phillips is the Tech Insights research lead for Deloitte Consulting. Jonathan Copulsky is a senior lecturer of marketing at Northwestern University and executive director of Northwestern's Spiegel Research Center. Comment on this article at https://sloanreview.mit.edu/x/62318.

Reprint 62318.

Virtual Collaboration Won't Be the Death of Creativity

Shifting to remote work can help groups generate better ideas — and more of them.

BY LEIGH THOMPSON

The COVID-19 pandemic put professionals in a box — a virtual one. Overnight, managers and their teams shifted from in-person brainstorming and ideation sessions to those taking place electronically via Zoom, WebEx, and other tools.

You might assume that major changes in how we work are taking a large toll on business creativity, in light of the loss of more spontaneous face-to-face connections and interactions. One of my most outspoken executive students — a young, data-driven manager at a technology consulting company — seemed to be making that assumption when he asked how I thought virtual work "thwarted" creative processes like those his teams engage in with their clients, such as defining problem scope, exploring solutions, prototyping, and testing. My answer surprised him: Based on research I and others have conducted over the past couple of decades, I believe that the shift to remote work actually has the potential to *improve* group creativity and ideation, despite diminished in-person communication.[1]

Remembering What Really Drives Creativity

Scholars define *creativity* as the production of novel and useful ideas.[2] *Novel*, in this context, means statistically rare and unique; *useful* means that some stakeholders see practical value in the ideas. In business, innovation is the realization of creative ideas as products and services. Think of the creative process like a river, starting with the upstream generation of ideas, often seemingly outlandish ones; proceeding to the testing and refinement of certain ideas midstream; and eventually moving downstream to the full development of chosen ideas.[3]

Virtual collaboration needn't hinder any of that, nor is it at odds with the following well-established ideas about what drives creativity.

Creative ability isn't fixed or inborn. Creativity is influenced by factors under one's control. In one study, for example, some participants were told that raw talent and ability determine creative outcomes, while others heard that factors such as motivation and persistence drive creativity.[4] Both groups then completed a creativity task scored by judges who didn't know what participants had been told. The group that believed creativity was under their control significantly outperformed the other. The conclusion from many such studies is that mindset

matters. And you don't need to collaborate in person to embrace a proactive mindset about creativity — you can do that independently, from anywhere.

Individuals are more creative than groups. When I ask business leaders in executive workshops who is more creative, groups or individuals, almost no one chooses individuals. It's widely believed that synergy among group members generates more creativity than individuals can. But virtually no research supports this. In fact, most studies have found that "per capita" creativity declines precipitously as group size increases.[5] Group dynamics can actually *diminish* overall creativity by stifling certain voices while amplifying others. In contrast to in-person meetings, where people tend to engage in simultaneous cross talk, virtual meetings make it nearly impossible for more than one person to speak at once. We're forced to focus on individual input, so it's easier for less vocal participants to be heard than in the physical world, where they're often drowned out. That addresses at least part of the challenge of having all voices represented and heard in creative meetings.

Constraints spark creative thinking. Working within limits pushes us to solve problems in ways we wouldn't if given free rein. For example, financial restrictions activate a tendency to think "big picture" and then trim down rather than follow a more organic idea-generation process that can result in a larger price tag.[6] And time pressure often prods more-efficient idea generation.[7] Moreover, imposing communication rules, such as "do not explain ideas," increases creative-idea generation — and groups that are interrupted with brief breaks produce more ideas, as do those that engage in electronic brainstorming (considered more constrained than in-person free-for-alls).[8]

Overall, virtual meeting platforms impose more constraints on communication and collaboration than face-to-face settings. For instance, with the press of a button, virtual meeting facilitators can control the size of breakout groups and enforce time constraints; only one person can speak intelligibly at a time; nonverbal signals, particularly those below the shoulders, are diminished; "seating arrangements" are assigned by the platform, not by individuals; and visual access to others may be limited by the size of each participant's screen. Such environmental restrictions are likely to stretch participants beyond their usual ways of thinking, boosting creativity.

How to Enhance Virtual-Group Creativity

If virtual collaboration doesn't kill creativity — and can actually boost it — how can teams maximize that upside? Here are some practical suggestions, drawn from the broad body of research on creativity and innovation. These ideas are useful for in-person collaborations, too, but given that virtual business meetings are now ubiquitous and in many organizations have replaced face-to-face conversations, we'll focus on the benefits of these tactics for remote creativity.

1. Prevent production blocking. As noted earlier, social scientists have long known that individuals are better than groups at creative-idea generation. Classic meta-analyses suggest that's true regarding the quantity and quality of ideas, as do recent empirical works. Studies have carefully compared the performance of people working independently with that of interactive groups, measuring per-person productivity (typically as *creative production percent*, based on the volume of ideas per person) and quality of ideas (assessed by independent experts blind to participant identities and experimental hypotheses) over a fixed period. Inevitably, individuals outperform groups.

Several social-psychological factors drive this consistent result.[9] A primary one is *production blocking*, or anything that interferes with a person's focus on creative-idea generation, including subtle factors.[10] One is conversation itself, which involves having to listen to others politely. Working remotely requires less of this. With less pressure for constant conversational engagement in virtual communication, people can more easily focus on generating ideas. Even so, there's still a performance aspect to virtual collaboration, with everyone's face on display; people may expend energy managing how they come across. Take steps to minimize that source of production blocking, such as by reserving large blocks of time for individual work, away from the shared screen.

2. Crush conformity. Excessive like-mindedness destroys creativity. Such conformity occurs when people believe that they must aim behavior at winning their group's acceptance. Fortunately, virtual collaboration involves less pressure to conform. That's partly because the group is less

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immediately present than in-person groups (yielding fewer cues about acceptance, such as eye contact only among certain members), and partly because of the *online disinhibition effect,* or the idea that people are more likely to express themselves and not worry about getting others to like them when interacting digitally.[11] It's true that virtual collaborators are often fully visible to one another and can't "hide" behind text-only forms of communication like email. However, the disinhibition effect still exerts influence, since many of the politeness rituals of in-person communication, such as vocalizing agreement and engaging in small talk, are no longer present.

3. Facilitate idea expression through *brainwriting.* Brainwriting is the more sophisticated cousin of brainstorming. In brainstorming, people throw out ideas in a free-for-all manner, ideally refraining from criticism; the belief is that off-the-cuff ideas might spark truly innovative ones. One problem with brainstorming is that people often self-censor out of concern about the group's response, as I noted above regarding conformity. And even when individuals are willing to speak up, they may not get the floor, given the chaotic flurry of ideas being shared.

Brainwriting resolves these issues through the simultaneous generation of ideas by individual group members. The group sets aside time for individuals to write down ideas; afterward, they come together to discuss them. But when it's time to share, in-person settings still induce self-censorship and the impulse to be "too nice" in assessing others' ideas. Virtual communication is ideal for brainwriting, because participants can anonymously contribute to a common virtual whiteboard or shared document without significant group influence. And when they meet to discuss ideas, doing so virtually helps them express their opinions more honestly (again, because of fewer group-acceptance cues).

4. Preempt insider-outsider bias. Research suggests that people evaluate ideas from colleagues more harshly than those from outsiders, particularly competitors.[12] They may feel compelled to devalue colleagues' ideas partly because they fear that the advancement of ideas by group members will lead to their own loss of status within the organization. One solution is to anonymize ideas so that each one can be evaluated independently of its source. In a face-to-face meeting, however, this can be very difficult, especially when ideas are shared on the spot. But the same virtual-communication principle that applies to brainwriting applies here: Digital tools enable people to contribute ideas from a safer distance, without revealing authorship, thus mitigating insider-outsider bias.

5. Promote high-construal thinking. Research indicates that low-construal thinking results in less creativity than the high-construal variety.[13] Think of low- and high-construal as degrees of focus of a camera lens: Low-construal thinking, like a telephoto lens, emphasizes details; high-construal thinking, the wide-angle lens, captures the bigger picture.

One study found that people think of more creative ideas when they believe they are interacting with someone at a greater physical distance, because this activates higher-construal thought processes (big-picture focus and abstract thinking).[14] Virtual communication inherently involves the perception of greater distance than in-person interactions. You can enhance this by asking each virtual meeting participant to announce their location: "Hello, this is Juliana from Panama," and so on.

6. Foster diverse interactions. My research with psychology professor Hoon-Seok Choi at Sungkyunkwan University suggests that the presence of a single newcomer can stimulate group creativity, yielding a larger number and variety of ideas.[15] In general, diversity enhances the creative

process. Yet in a typical face-to-face meeting, people sit by their friends and colleagues, often engaging in sidebars or shared nonverbal interactions, which have the unintended consequence of promoting conformity and narrowing creative focus. In a virtual meeting, you can't choose your seat, and having sidebar conversations is not nearly as tempting, given the shared screen and risk of accidentally messaging a private thought to everyone. Moreover, the group-breakout function defaults to sorting people randomly. These factors make it more likely that people in virtual settings will interact with participants they don't know well, boosting creativity.

7. Keep idea vaults and boneyards. Pre-COVID-19, many in-person brainstorming meetings were not recorded, erasing any trace of discarded ideas. That fails to maximize group output, because returning to ideas that were previously suggested increases group performance.[16] Why? Silence is the biggest killer of creative-idea generation; giving voice to ideas (even old ones) spurs new insights. Luckily, chat windows, electronic whiteboards, and other virtual-collaboration tools serve as vaults and "boneyards," memorializing sessions and making it easier to revisit previously overlooked ideas.

NONE OF THIS is to suggest that virtual communication is a cure-all for addressing creative-collaboration issues, or that managers and their teams should aim to work in their own "lighthouses" whenever possible, shunning face-to-face contact. However, virtual collaboration does provide benefits that many of us didn't realize or pursue in pre-COVID-19 times. Our creative output may be all the better for it.

Leigh Thompson is a management professor and director of the Kellogg Team and Group Research Center at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Her latest book is Negotiating the Sweet Spot: The Art of Leaving Nothing on the Table *(Harper-Collins Leadership, 2020). Comment on this article at https://sloanreview.mit.edu/x/62203.*

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The Future of Team Leadership Is Multimodal

Robert Hooijberg and Michael Watkins

COVID-19 is accelerating a shift to hybrid work models, which requires a fundamental change in the skills team leaders need to succeed.

The pandemic has accelerated a pre-COVID-19 shift in how individuals and teams do intellectual work. Companies have learned that routine tasks involving transactions and coordination can be done purely virtually, while work requiring true team collaboration (collective learning, innovation, building a shared culture) is still best done face to face. We envision that the post-pandemic future of teamwork will be a purposeful hybrid combination of virtual coordination and in-person collaboration.

Effective leadership in this new hybrid world requires different skills that go beyond traditional team leadership. Specifically, organizations will need leaders who can operate well across two distinct modes. For much of the time, they will operate in *virtual coordination mode*. This means establishing goals, monitoring progress, driving information sharing, and sustaining connections among colleagues working remotely. When their teams periodically come

together to engage in true collaboration, leaders will need to operate in *face-to-face collaboration mode*, fostering deep learning, innovation, acculturation, and dedication.

The nature and mix of team tasks will dictate the modes in which those teams operate. Tasks that involve working interdependently but without much integration — reporting, performing administrative tasks, making simple decisions, sharing information, drafting documents, and performing financial analyses — will mostly be done virtually. Likewise, our research and experience have shown that most one-on-one interactions, including some coaching, between leaders and their reports can be accomplished effectively through virtual means.

However, essential tasks that require team members to integrate their knowledge, create safe spaces for dialogue on difficult issues, and form emotional connections cannot be done productively while working virtually. For example, team efforts to achieve breakthrough innovation, solve complex problems, build culture, and manage conflicts are still performed much more effectively in person, given the current limitations of technology. (See "The Future of Work Survey" for more about the research.)

These complex tasks are challenging to perform virtually because they involve four dimensions of impact that are better served through in-person interactions:

- **Collaboration**, which is not just about content collaboration and coordination but also building a shared

understanding, relationships, and trust.

- **Innovation**, which requires brainstorming, knowledge integration, and shared learning, for which trust and time together in a nonstressful environment are essential.

- **Acculturation**, which requires extended periods of face-to-face connection to develop mutual understanding, reinforce norms, and build a shared identity.

- **Dedication**, which comes from having a shared sense of purpose, feeling like part of a community, and having opportunities to grow professionally.

The implications for the future of leadership are profound. The multimodal workplace is changing the types of skills required to lead teams virtually and in person successfully. In particular, there are four roles that leaders will need to play as they adapt to managing a hybrid workforce. Their relative importance will depend on the extent of team coordination and integration.

Conductor. A mostly virtual team leadership role, the Conductor ensures that plans, decisions, information, and accomplishments are shared to coordinate and motivate team members. The role is akin to that of an orchestra director, who ensures that musicians play well individually and in harmony. In the Conductor role, leaders manage goal setting, simple planning, decision-making, work coordination, and progress tracking while sustaining connection, trust, and engagement with team members.

For success in this role, leaders must strike the right balance between demonstrating genuine care and engagement and micromanaging, which saps morale. The pandemic has highlighted how exhausting endless video calls are, requiring Conductors to be highly efficient and engaging in their orchestration of virtual team time.

Catalyst. When meeting in person, the Catalyst stimulates collaboration, spurs creativity and innovation, creates a shared culture, and fosters dedication. To accomplish this, these leaders must build trust and create an environment of psychological safety. Doing so allows them to facilitate in-depth dialogue and encourage creative conflict — but

not harmful personality clashes — when sharing ideas. We use the term *catalyst* to indicate that the focus here is on enabling others to shine and facilitating collaboration processes.

Coach. When working one-on-one with their reports virtually or in person, leaders need to play the role of Coach. This means focusing on helping their people achieve peak performance while building trust and focusing on their well-being and professional development. Playing this role effectively requires a high degree of emotional intelligence and the ability to establish a balance between showing empathy and encouraging people to push beyond their boundaries. When done well, coaching can enhance connections, as well as engagement and productivity.

Champion. Whereas the Conductor, Catalyst, and Coach roles involve managing individuals and teams who report directly to a particular leader, the Champion role requires leaders to advocate externally *for* their teams. It requires leaders to secure team resources, tap into essential information sources, communicate accomplishments, and build trust with peers and other key stakeholders both in person and virtually. The Champion role, therefore, requires skills in negotiating, influencing without formal authority, and building alliances.

A central theme linking all four roles is the need for leaders to build and sustain connections and trust. Many companies did not embrace remote work before the pandemic because they lacked trust in their employees to be productive at home. At the same time, there were concerns about managers' ability to monitor performance. However, building and sustaining trust is essential to multimodal leadership, especially when the team is operating virtually.

Fostering trust shows up in each of the 4-C roles in distinct ways. In the Conductor role, leaders encourage trust by sharing achievements so that everyone knows their colleagues are contributing to the team's success. In the virtual world, we are often suspicious that peers are slacking off, and emotions can run high in a crisis. Another way to strengthen trust is to personally check in with your team members to see how they are coping, how their work is progressing, and what help they might need. This is one of the central themes of emotional intelligence, and it can also

strengthen team spirit. Checking in at the individual level is also an essential element of the Coach role.

These trust-building methods work well online, but when teams come together in person, leaders will want to channel the Catalyst role, where trust plays an essential role in spurring innovation and creativity. After all, people need to feel safe to experiment and share moonshot ideas without fear of being judged. Therefore, the Catalyst role requires leaders to create healthy, safe bonds with teams by playing more of an enabling rather than a directive role. This requires managers to balance confidence with an appropriate degree of humility and social awareness.

For example, when we work with teams of leaders at IMD, we often have executives share some of the highs and lows in their lives, creating connection and trust through the experience of shared vulnerability. It brings people closer together and opens up the possibility for greater collaboration. But we have found that sharing personal issues is not something all participants would feel comfortable doing on a Zoom call. Creating a trusting environment is critical to the roles of both Coach and Catalyst, along with emotional intelligence that can be honed through working on one's self-awareness, self-care, social awareness, and relationship management.

The higher up in an organization you rise, the more critical the Champion role becomes. The matrix organizational structures of many companies require leaders to rely on organizational influence rather than authority to obtain the necessary resources for teams and contribute in a meaningful way to the company's overall goals. In the Champion role, we build trust with our peers by showing interest in their aspirations and by putting organizational goals ahead of our own team's objectives.

Leaders need to recognize that they might need help themselves to provide support to their teams as they play these four roles. Most leaders are already proficient in the Conductor role because it requires many traditional management and leadership skills, such as monitoring, delegating, decision-making, and motivating. In contrast, the Catalyst and Coach roles need different sets of skills and attitudes. Here we think especially of facilitation skills, emotional intelligence, and humility.

To be successful in this new era, team leaders must learn to adapt the four roles of multimodal leadership: Conductor, Catalyst, Coach, and Champion. These four roles provide a framework for leadership effectiveness in the post-pandemic world of work.

About The Authors

Robert Hooijberg is a professor of organizational behavior at IMD Business School. Michael Watkins is a professor of leadership and organizational change at IMD, cofounder of leadership consultancy Genesis, and author of *The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2013).
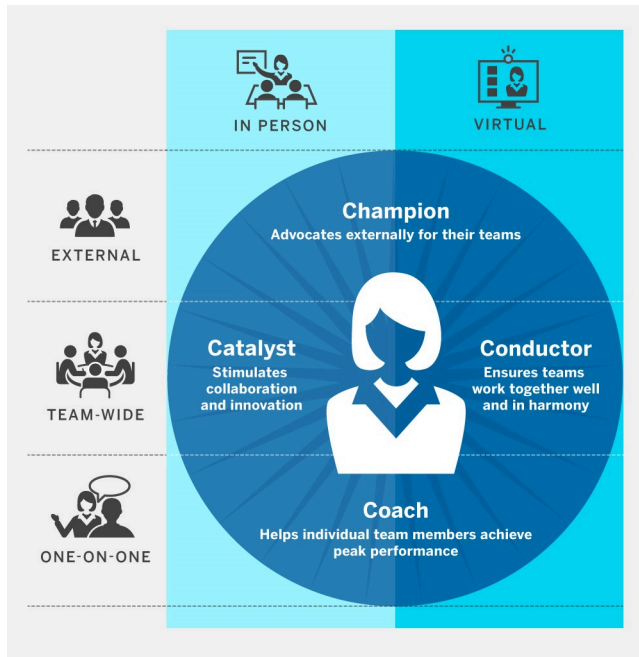
The Future of Work Survey

We surveyed 40 executives globally in November 2020 and found that three-quarters of them were working virtually for at least 60% of the time and two-thirds more than 80% of the time. They expected to continue working at least 50% virtually beyond the pandemic, suggesting that COVID-19 has driven a permanent shift in how we work.

When asked what work can be done effectively virtually, 45% of respondents mentioned transactional team activities such as reporting, giving updates, performing administrative tasks, and making simple decisions; 25% pointed to participating in one-to-one meetings and having similar types of interactions, such as interviews and one-on-one coaching.

In a related question about which work cannot be done effectively by virtual means, 40% mentioned integrative work in teams, including innovating, making strategic decisions, or solving complex problems. Additionally, 15% pointed to building relationships and networking, while 13% identified negotiating and having difficult conversations.

Multimodal Leadership Roles

The amount of time team leaders work with their teams in the virtual Conductor role as opposed to in-person Catalyst will depend on the extent to which the team's work requires the integration of members' knowledge and perspectives. The greater the interdependence, the more time the leader will have to act as Catalyst. The extent to which leaders will do coaching in person likely will depend on proximity.

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