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Research Report

Managing and Leading Hybrid Teams

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Managing and Leading **Hybrid Teams**



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Preface

During the Covid pandemic, amazing things that had previously seemed unthinkable to many were suddenly possible: employees working entirely from home, meetings held in online sessions, conferences and events designed virtually. Though we humans always have an ambivalent relationship to change, enormous challenges give us the chance to grow beyond ourselves. The last two years have proven this once more: Despite many technical and also human challenges, we have made virtual space a routine.

Although remote working also has its disadvantages, people in companies and institutions will not want to miss this form of flexibility in the future.

In that regard, more and more leaders are faced with the challenge of managing employees remotely and face to face; in a sense, combining the best of both worlds. We talk about hybrid team leadership. If, for example, the challenge that everyone used the camera so that we could catch some of the body language signals of our counterparts or counteract the dissociation of work seemed great before, the combination of both worlds reveals further obstacles.

Hybrid teams in which members can flexibly determine their working time and place must systematically redefine processes and forms of communication to make this collaboration compatible. Questions such as „What communication agreements do we want to make?“ are just as important as avoiding the emergence of subcultures or asking „What demands does the team have of the manager?“

Even if every form of cooperation has its charm, one thing must not fall by the wayside: the personal relationship between employees and supervisors, but also between the individual team members. Otherwise, the crucial team identity is missing. Cohesion in teams is the best guarantee for team success and the well-being of everyone involved. The art of leadership is not only to achieve the goals, but also to increasingly challenge and encourage the individual for the benefit of the entire team.

Prof. Dr. Katrin Winkler, Svenja König and Prof. Dr. Claudia Heß find answers to these and many more questions. The authors guide the reader through the world of hybrid leadership in a practice-oriented and scientifically sound manner. They shed light on the different perspectives of employees and leaders and thus clearly show where to start so that this form of leadership can succeed.

I am pleased to welcome you and wish all readers every success in achieving their goals and developing the people in their teams!

Barbara Liebermeister



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Chapter 1

Do We Need Hybrid Teams?

In a changing society (Pousttchi, 2020), we are networking more and more and are in constant contact with friends and colleagues all over the world. Digital media that are now available at all times and offer almost unlimited access to knowledge from all over the world make this possible. Simultaneously, individuality and self-realization are becoming increasingly important with improved access to such opportunities in the digital space, which also includes a desire for flexibility and self-determination at work.

Megatrends such as globalization, digitalization as well as demographic change have a major impact on our daily lives, on society as a whole and thus on the corporate world as well (Zukunftsinstitut, 2022).

The corporate world is currently being strongly influenced and changed by digitalization – and with it, employees and managers operating in this world. Our living and working environments are increasingly characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Factors that are summarized under the acronym VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) (Mack & Khare, 2016).

These factors affect the way companies work together and mean that work in traditional teams, whose members all sit together on site in the same office, is increasingly being broken up. Work processes as well as general cooperation and collaborative work in teams are being rethought (Stocker, 2020), and project teams that only come together for a limited time and then break up again become increasingly popular. This also leads to us increasingly working with colleagues based at another location, in another country or on a different continent – or simply at home in their home office (Gerdenitsch & Korunka, 2019; Hackl et al., 2017). These and other developments are driving the transformation of work environments and are gradually forcing companies to adapt their strategy, culture, structures, and processes to these changes (Montua, 2020).

This development is supported by the current COVID-19 crisis, which has led, for example, to the need for an ad hoc switch to mobile working and a transition to digital processes. Digitalization at work is currently progressing rapidly and is present in many industries and sectors, although it is characterized by great uncertainties due to the high speed of change (Stocker, 2020).

Thus, the current crisis poses great challenges to the whole society and, consequently, to the companies (Pawlowska & Scherer, 2021). In a large number of companies, as many employees as possible have been sent to home office in recent months in order to protect them and at the same time maintain operations. By the Corona Occupational Health and Safety Ordinance, employers have been obliged to send their employees – as far as possible – to home office for the first time (Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung, 2021). Overnight, mobile working became necessary and possible (Pawlowska & Scherer, 2021), as did a flexibilization of work, even in places where not so long ago many voices claimed that this was not possible, such as in the manufacturing industry (Kleiminger & Wortmann, 2021). A **paradigm shift** is happening in the world of work, in which digitalization in particular can be identified as the main driver. These trends were already evident before the current pandemic (Gerdenitsch & Korunka, 2019; Hackl et al., 2017) and suggest that this change will continue even after the crisis.

This is because the constant changes in the world of work mean new challenges for people in organizations, such as the acquisition of future-oriented competencies – they must constantly adapt their behavior and actions to the changing parameters (Scher-muly, 2016; Deloitte AG, 2017; Eilers et al., 2017).

Facts & Figures

The fact that the paradigm shift in the world of work described above will continue after the crisis, as indicated, can be demonstrated by several studies.

Results of the „Hybrid Work Compass“ study by the University of St. Gallen, Novu Office and HR Campus indicate a doubling of the proportion of those companies using or planning to use hybrid work models from 35% at the time before the pandemic to 77% in the post-pandemic period (Berger et al., 2021). The following diagram illustrates the specific development for

different forms of hybrid teams, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.3.

A strong increase for the work models hybrid remote work and hybrid is visible, whereas the share of the forms hybrid light and work in presence visibly decreases.

Working Models Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

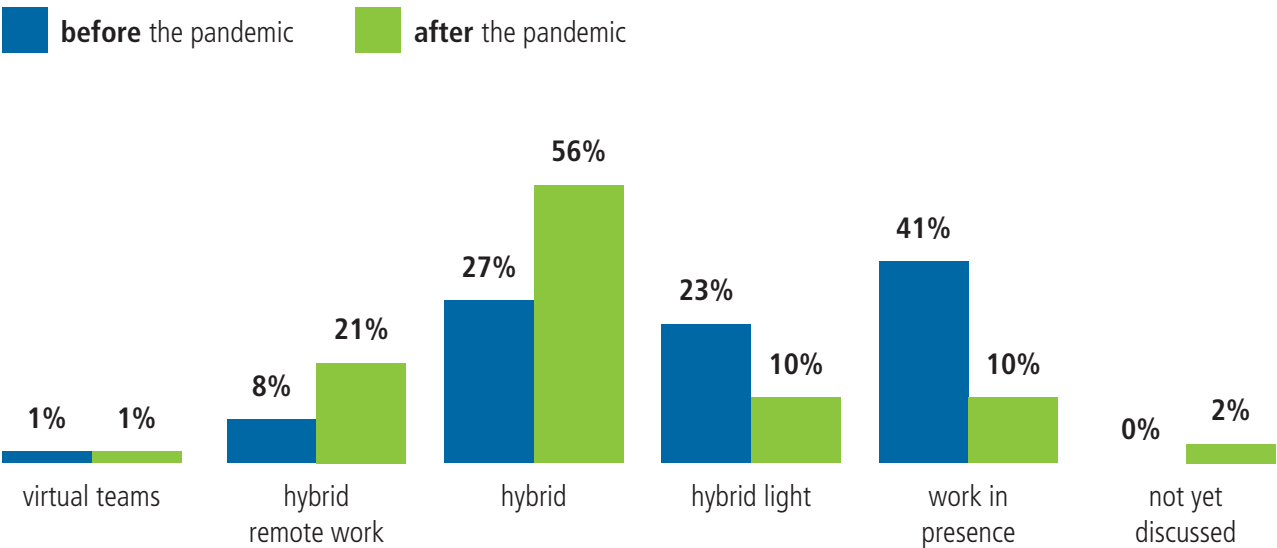


Figure 1:
Working Models Before and After the COVID-19 Pandemic,
Own diagram based on Berger et al., 2021, p. 5

Facts & Figures

Additionally, the increasing importance of hybrid teamwork is proven by findings of the Institute for Digital Transformation in Work, Education and Society, as illustrated in the figure below.

Compared to 9% of respondents who already worked in a hybrid team before the pandemic, the percentage of those who would like to work in a hybrid team after the pandemic is 49%.

Last but not least, nine out of ten executives surveyed in the Microsoft study „Work. Reworked 2020“ also assume that hybrid working will continue to exist in the long term. (Hartwich, 2021)

Hybrid Teams – „The New Normal“

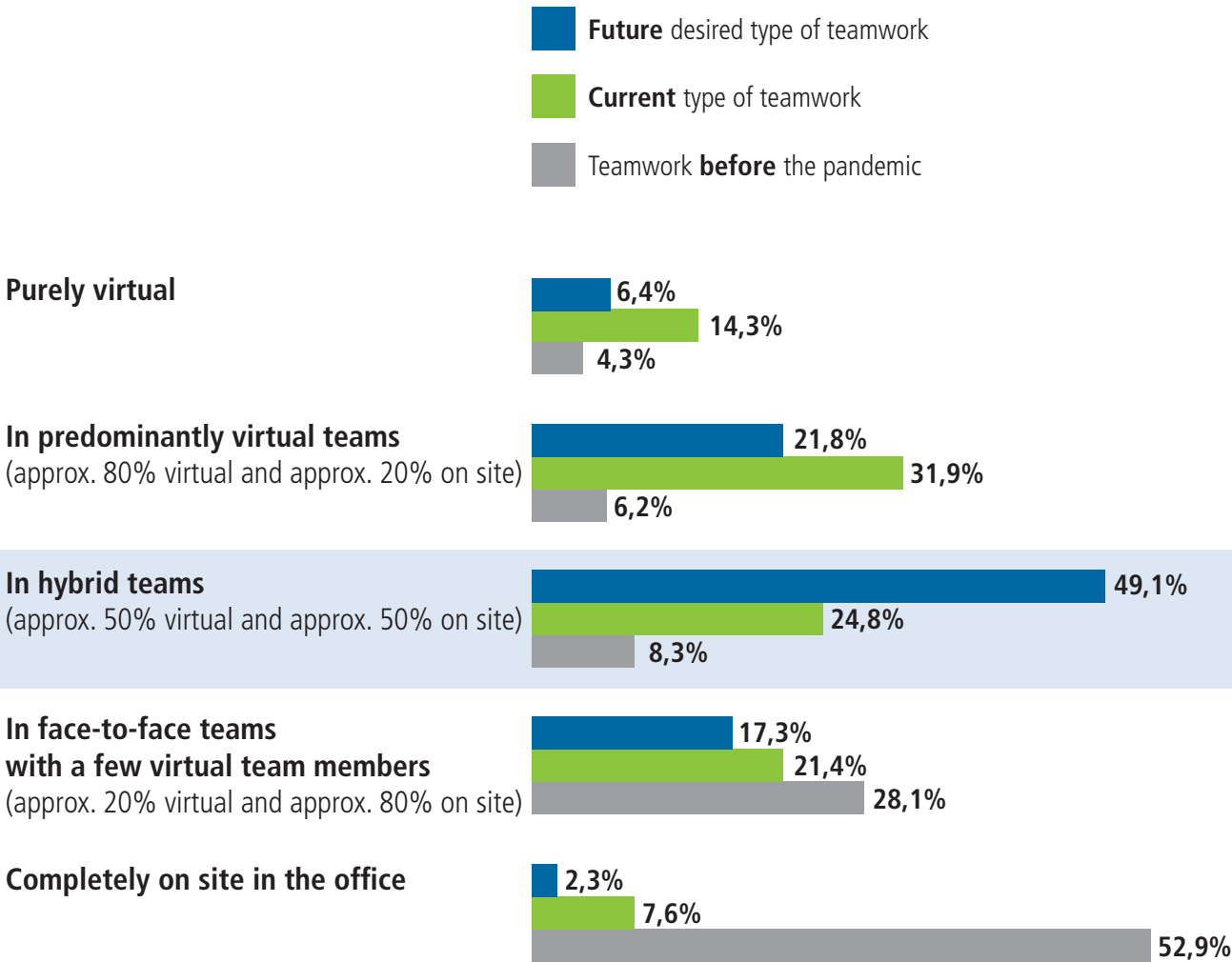


Figure 2:
Hybrid Teams – „The New Normal“



Chapter 2 The New Normal?

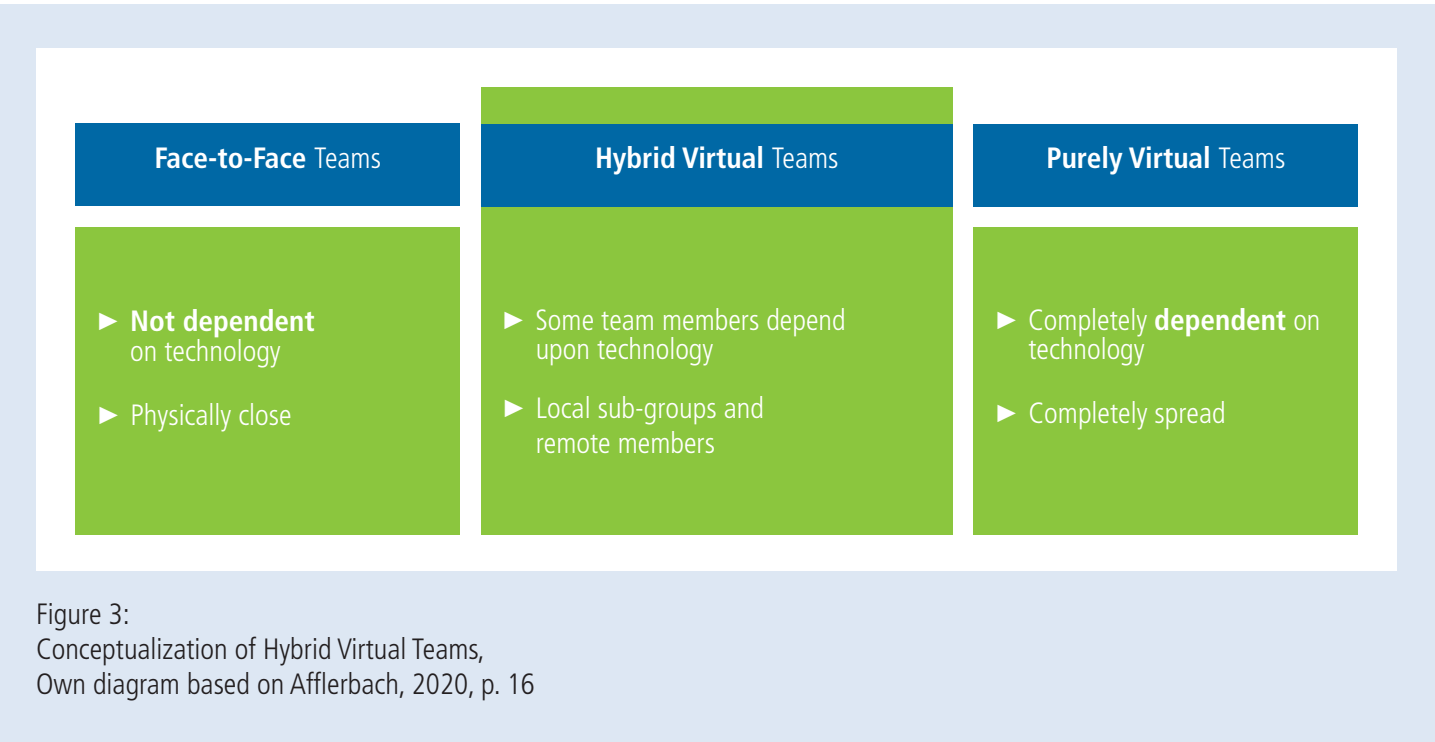
To develop a more precise understanding of the special framework conditions for collaboration in hybrid teams right from the start, the following chapter looks at their specific characteristics. This is the starting point for making a more precise distinction between hybrid, face-to-face and virtual teams, and then distinguishing different forms of hybrid teams.

2.1 What are Hybrid Teams?

Minder (2020) identifies the specific constellation of team members working together at the same location and members working remotely as a key characteristic of hybrid teams – in distinction to face-to-face and virtual teams (Afflerbach, 2020). This implies a collaboration supported by digital media as another characteristic (Bernardy et al., 2021), with hybrid teams distinctly combining such technology-supported interaction with face-to-face communication (Minder, 2020).

This is illustrated by the following graphic based on Afflerbach, in which traditional, hybrid, and virtual teams are distinguished from one another along a continuum that describes the degree of technology dependency.

This conceptualization of teams is based on previous work by Griffith and Neale (2001), who in turn distinguish between traditional, hybrid and virtual teams on the basis of the two dimensions „Time Spent Working Apart“ and „Degree of Virtuality“, described by the extent of technological tools (Griffith & Neale, 2001 cited in Griffith & Meader, 2004, p. 236).



2.2

Differences

Presence - Virtual – Hybrid

After the conceptualization discussed above based on Afflerbach has already revealed significant differences between traditional, virtual and hybrid teams, the following section will specify this distinction.

We need a more precise definition of traditional and virtual teams to further specify such a distinction. As to that, Bell and Kozlowski (2002) identify the essential characteristics of face-to-face teams – as opposed to the previously considered characteristics for hybrid teams – as cooperation in close spatial proximity as well as personal interaction. A study by Andres (2002) shows that in face-to-face teams, a higher quality of interaction is perceived compared to videoconference-supported groups, which is related to the possibility of giving immediate and efficient feedback through the use of verbal, nonverbal and back-channeling cues. Moreover, Purvanova and Bono (2009), point to a very high level of information assurance and correct understanding that results there from the possibility to use different communication channels simultaneously as a distinctive feature of face-to-face teams (Purvanova & Bono, 2009, cited in Minder, 2020). As to that, the authors also highlight a sense of shared presence and conversational participation in face-to-face communication (Purvanova & Bono, 2009).

In contrast, virtual teams, which are becoming increasingly important as organizational units (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002), are characterized by a particular complexity and more limited communication capabilities due to the different cultural backgrounds and languages of their members (Minder, 2020). Martins, Gilson and Maynard (2004) define them as teams whose members use technologies to varying degrees in working across locational, temporal, and relational boundaries to accomplish an interdependent task. Another definition by Suzanne (2001) also reflects corresponding characteristics in this regard, stating that virtual teams are a group of distributed workers with different skill sets who focus temporarily or continuously on a specific goal (Suzanne, 2001 cited in Minder, 2020). In this respect, a particular advantage of the virtual team environment is the ability to connect people efficiently and effectively, which in turn leads to positive effects on productivity levels (ibid.). It also creates an opportunity for companies to save money as well as to promote creativity and equality among team members (Bergiel et al., 2008).

SIMILARLY,
COLLABORATION
IN VIRTUAL
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TEAM MEMBERS.

2.3

Forms of hybrid teams

Following the previous general distinction between traditional, hybrid and virtual teams, we can determine **different classifications** within the form of the hybrid team according to the respective proportion of presence work or virtual work. The „Hybrid Work Compass“ study by the University of St. Gallen, Novu Office and HR Campus (Berger et al., 2021, p. 5) considers the following five forms of hybrid teams:

- 1. Work in presence:** work outside the office is the exception.
- 2. Hybrid light:** decentralized, virtual work typically takes place on one day per week.
- 3. Hybrid:** Employees have the option of working remote on several days a week. Still, the office remains the central workplace.
- 4. Hybrid remote:** Work is done is completely flexibly. The office is mainly used for personal exchange.
- 5. Virtual teams:** employees are urged to work virtually.

These forms of hybrid teams were derived from 150 interviews with managers and 841 companies (ibid.).

In addition, a further distinction can be made according to the respective ratio of on-site and remote team members. This distribution can be even or can have only a small number of remote team members. The latter form of hybrid team is also referred to as a **Satellite Hybrid Team**, as the graphic below illustrates.

Due to their specific characteristics, the different forms of hybrid teams also pose different challenges. If a fixed core team is implemented within the hybrid team, which works only or predominantly in presence, team members working virtually may be not or only insufficiently informed about agreements made on site by the core team. This can lead to the ideas about the tasks and goals of the team varying between its two parts, which in turn creates the risk of imbalance and the development of conflict within the hybrid team. While hybrid teams in which the proportion of online and offline working time is largely the same for all members are less likely to be confronted with the risk of such a split, there is instead a risk of fundamentally more fragmented knowledge.

The form of hybrid team being used also implies different requirements for the spatial design of the office space on site. In particular for evenly distributed hybrid teams, this raises the question of the extent to which there is actually still a need for the classic individual on-site office.

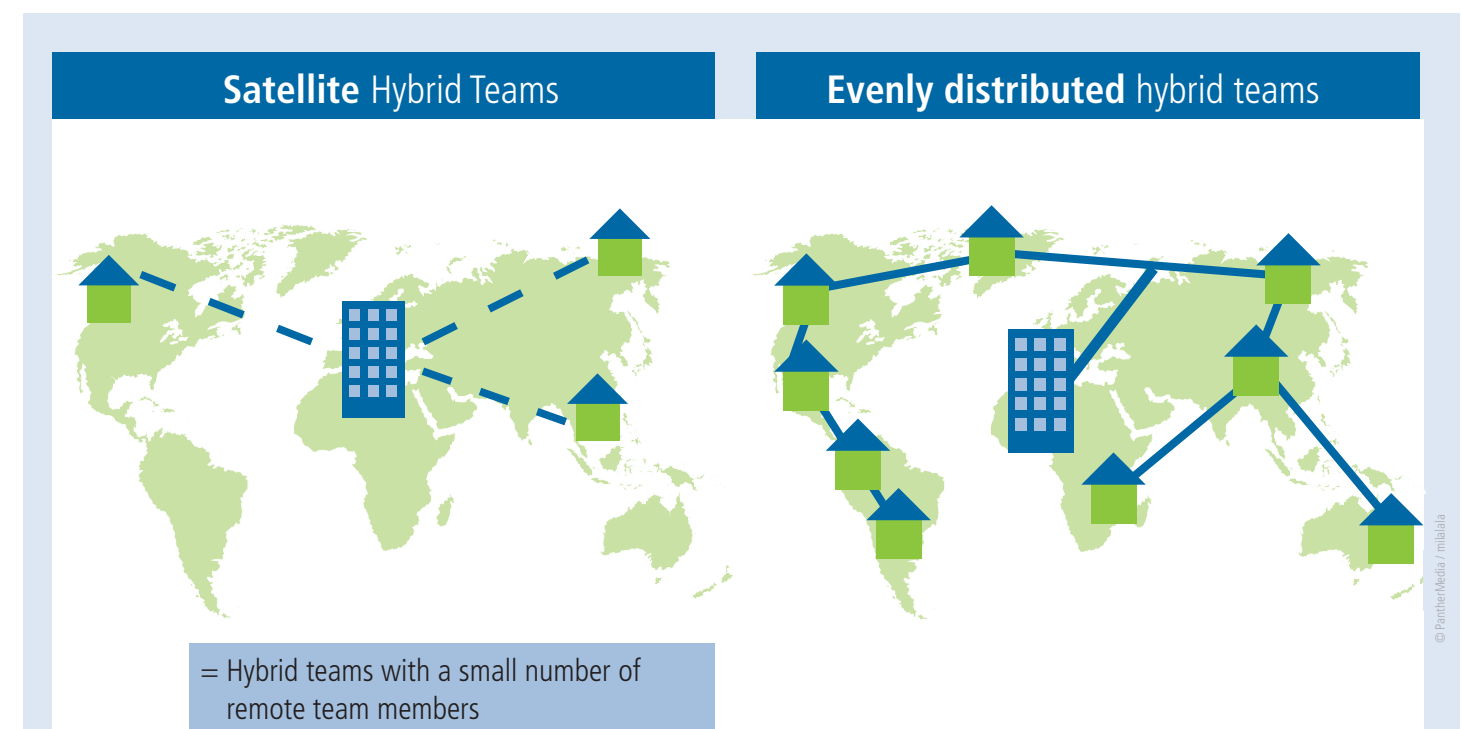


Figure 4:
Different Forms of Hybrid Teams



Chapter 3 What Can Go Wrong?

Based on the consideration of such challenges for different forms of hybrid teams, the following section will highlight specific challenges that this form of collaboration poses for the members of hybrid teams and their leaders. First, we focus initially on the challenges faced by the team members.

3.1 Challenges for Employees

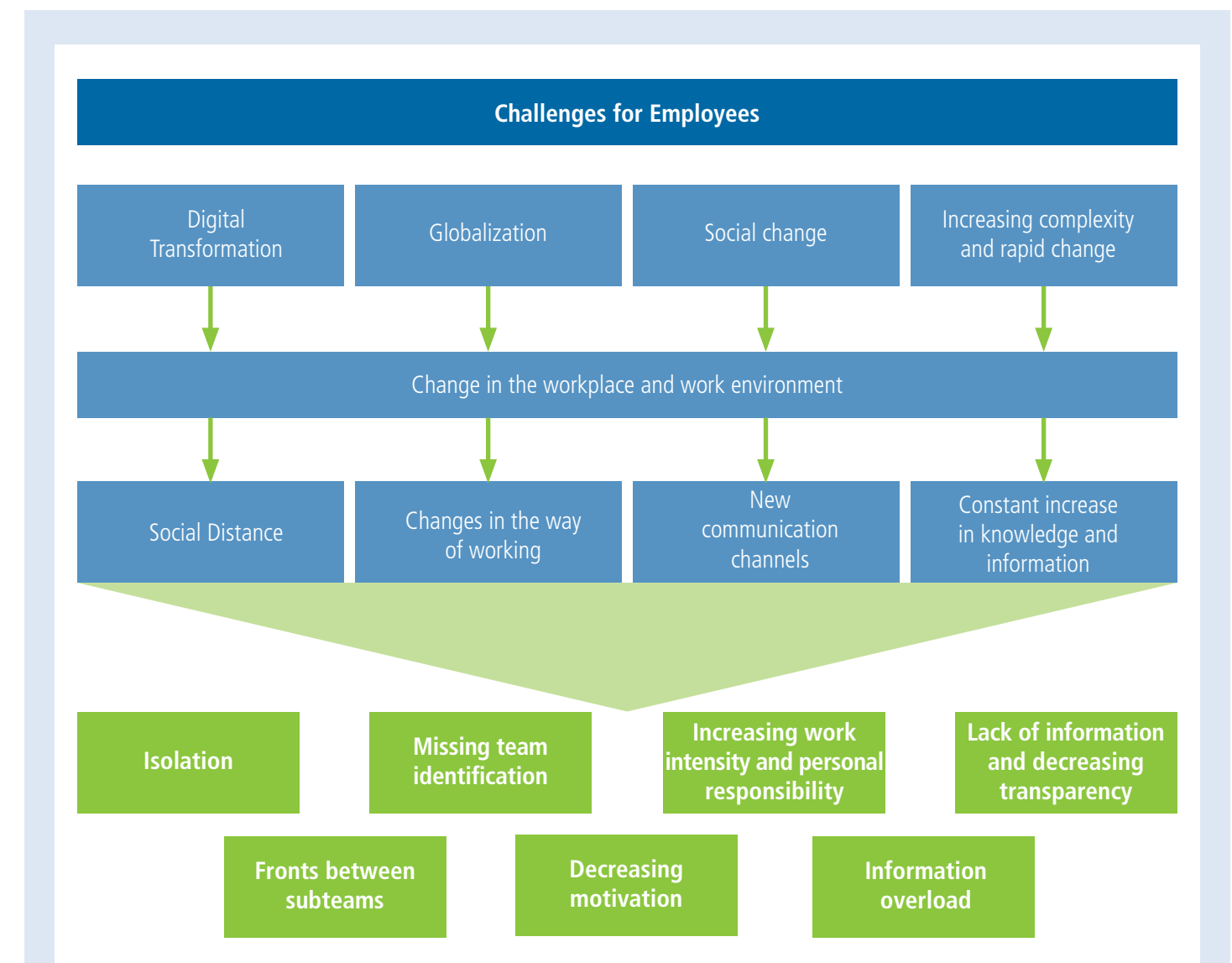


Figure 5:
Challenges of Hybrid Teams – Employee Perspective

To introduce this chapter, the graphic illustrates the central challenges that the change in the workplace outlined above poses for employees. It shows the results of a survey conducted by the Institute for Leadership in the Digital Age in 2021, in which 159 managers were asked in an online survey about the greatest challenges they perceived in leading hybrid teams.

The Biggest Challenges in Leading Hybrid Teams

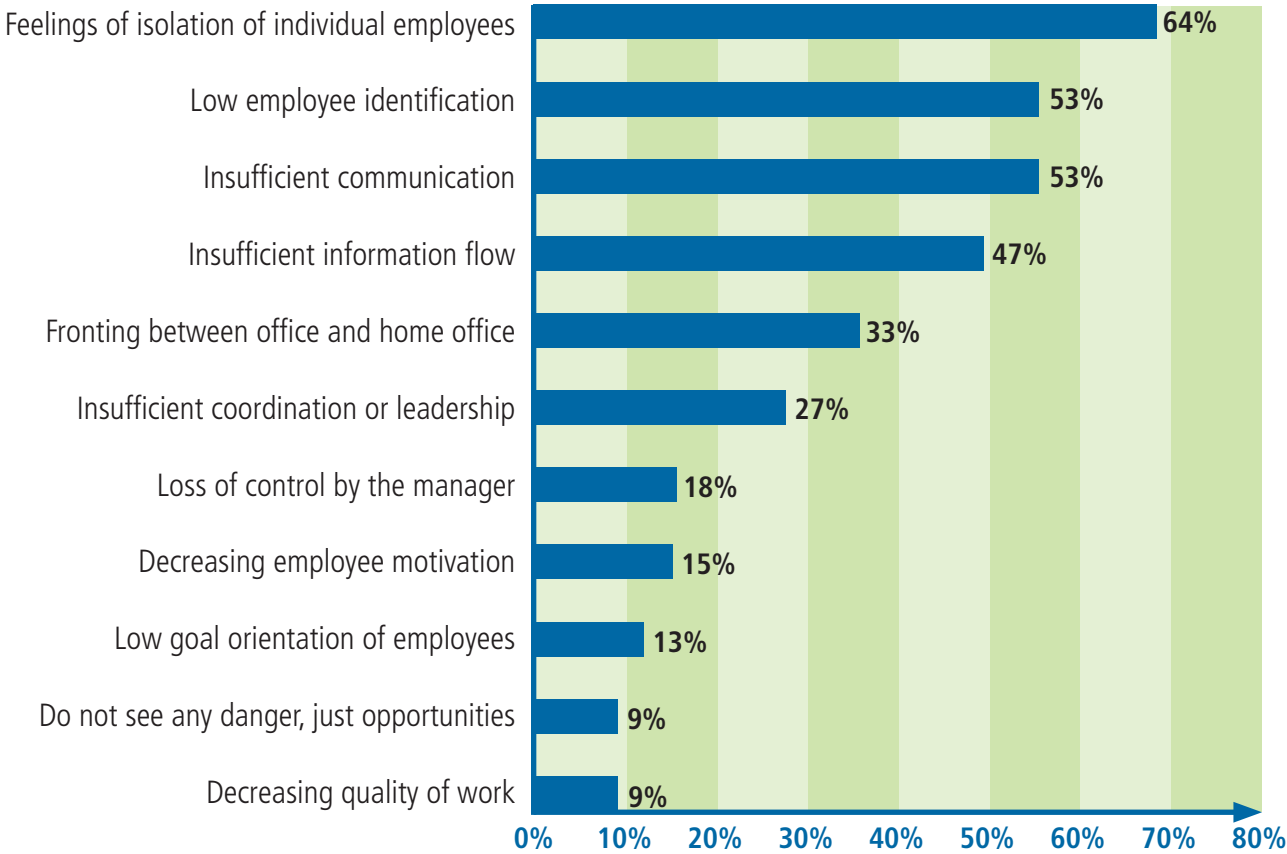


Figure 6:
The Biggest Challenges in Leading Hybrid Teams, Own diagram
based on IFIDZ, 2021

Isolation

According to this survey , 64% of respondents consider a feeling of isolation among individual employees to be one of the greatest challenges (IFIDZ, 2021). Such a feeling can arise in hybrid teams in particular because the team members working virtually are separated from the other team members – at least in terms of location – and thus automatically from the social and professional interactions that take place in the office on a daily basis. In this context, a differentiation between social and professional isolation is in order. While social isolation means a fundamental lack of social interaction and communication (cf. Kunze et al., 2021, p. 45), professional isolation is the experience of not having sufficient access to professional networks and developmental activities, such as networking, informal learning or mentoring (cf. ibid.).

Low Identification of Employees with the Team

Another challenge is that employees identify less with the team (IFIDZ, 2021). The fact that only a part of the hybrid team has the opportunity for a more comprehensive face-to-face communication and, as a result, cognitions and emotions can develop very differently within the team, poses the challenge of the **formation of subgroups**, which in turn can lead to negative effects on communication across the entire team (Bernardy et al., 2021). This is already reflected in results of an empirical study by Webster and Wong (2008), who compared face-to-face and virtual teams with semi-virtual teams in terms of team identity and trust and found that hybrid teams faced greater challenges. In semi-virtual teams, for example, subgroups were formed that were characterized by a particularly strong sense of identity and a high level of trust between the team members on site, which, however, was not formed with the virtually working members. In connection with this, the authors also observed that there was less frequent communication between the on-site sub-team and the virtual team members (ibid.).

Comparison of Group Identity for Different Team Types

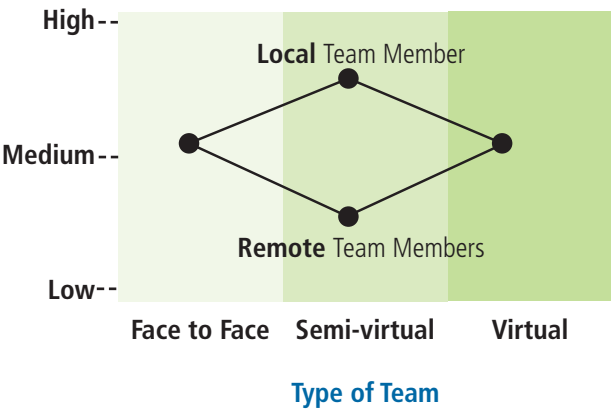


Figure 7:
Comparison of Group Identity for Different Team Types,
own diagram based on Webster & Wong, 2008, p. 53

Information Flow: Information Overload vs. Lack of Info

It becomes apparent that special challenges also exist for the flow of information. These seem to be connected with the online and offline composition (cf. Bernardy et al., 2021, p. 120) of hybrid teams, which changes on a daily basis and of which **disparities in the flow of information** can also arise (ibid.).

In addition to such a difficulty through the disparity of information, an overabundance of information is likewise perceived as challenging, as it poses the danger of less conscious processing of information (ibid.).

[Hidden Profile Paradigm]. Lastly, in the context of these particular challenges to information flow in hybrid teams, the hidden profile paradigm should be mentioned. The term hidden profile is used to describe a decision-making situation in a group in which task-relevant information is distributed among group members in such a way that no individual group member can find the best solution based on the information they possess (cf. Schulz-Hardt & Brodbeck, 2014, p. 485). Based on this, the hidden profile paradigm describes the phenomenon that information that a group member has exclusively remains unshared in the decision-making process and only the information that is already known to all is exchanged (Kopp, 2020). In this way, it prevents the use of information advantages and synergy effects and, as a result, is detrimental to the quality of the decisions made (Mojzisch et al., 2004).

When cooperating in hybrid teams, it is particularly important to consider this phenomenon since due to their specific composition of local and remote team members, information is often distributed very unevenly and thus, compared to a smaller amount of shared information, a higher number of such individual information components is given. In this context, the merging of this special and expert knowledge offers a significant opportunity for hybrid collaboration, so that the examination of the paradigm and its dissolution is important in this context.

Creation of Fronts Between Office and Home Office Employees

Due to the specific composition of hybrid teams consisting of remote team members as well as members who work on-site, the formation of fronts between office and home office employees also poses a challenge (IFIDZ, 2021). 33% of the executives taking part in the survey conducted by the Institute for Leadership Culture in the Digital Age considered this to be one of the greatest difficulties in managing hybrid teams (ibid.).

In addition, the results of the study „Hybrid HR – Eine neue Personalfunktion für eine neue Arbeitswelt“ also point to this is a **potential for tension**, which is not only present within a team, but also **due to different attendance policies** for different functional areas (FAZ Business Media, 2021). Accordingly, 80% of the participants of the study expect at least minor tensions and 25% even expect major ones. Only 10% of the respondents believe that the hybrid working environment will not result in any „atmospheric disruption“ (ibid.).

In addition to the potential for tension caused by different attendance policies, a particular potential for conflict in virtual collaboration can also arise from a high level of media use. This leads to a different form of communication that is predominantly asynchronous and focused on factual content, which in turn favors the development of misunderstandings due to the lack of nonverbal messages. A further cause of potential conflicts is the physical distance, which makes it difficult to assess the feelings of the other party. Finally, a change in transparency can also be a particular cause of conflicts in virtual teams. The greater transparency in virtual teams may not only have advantages due to the sharing of documents, virtual workspaces, and common data storage, but also negative effects in the form of competition, fear of surveillance or an attack on self-esteem due to comparisons. (Hermann et al., 2012)

ADDITIONALLY,
THE SPATIAL
AND TEMPORAL
DISTANCE IN VIRTUAL
COLLABORATION
MAKES IT MORE
DIFFICULT TO PROVIDE
IMMEDIATE AND
DIRECT FEEDBACK.

Declining Motivation

In addition, the spatial and temporal distance in virtual collaboration makes it more difficult to provide immediate and direct feedback. The perception of a lack of appreciation of one's own performance can contribute to a declining employee motivation. Likewise, the lack of positive recognition from immediate colleagues and a feeling of being overburdened can lead to a declining motivation. (Winkler & Bramwell, 2020)

Mental Health

The increasing merging of work and private life that mobile working implies also presents employees with particular challenges related to maintaining mental health. This is evident in the results of a study by Capterra, which identified a lack of division between work and personal life as the most significant of three key aspects that contribute to the perception of higher stress levels when working from home. Furthermore, two key factors of the perception of increased stress are characterized by **difficulties in managing work and personal life at the same time**, as well as a strain due to the feeling of always having to be online. (Bahr, 2021)

In addition, employees in home office see themselves exposed to increased pressure, which in turn has a negative impact on their health-related well-being, as their performance is less visible to managers when they work from home. In the same way, fears due to assumed or actual information deficits are expressed. (ibid.)

Finally, maintaining mental health also is a key challenge in the findings of the Hybrid Work Compass study (Berger et al., 2021).

3.2 Challenges for Managers

After looking at challenges faced by hybrid team members, we now focus on the specific challenges of hybrid team leadership.

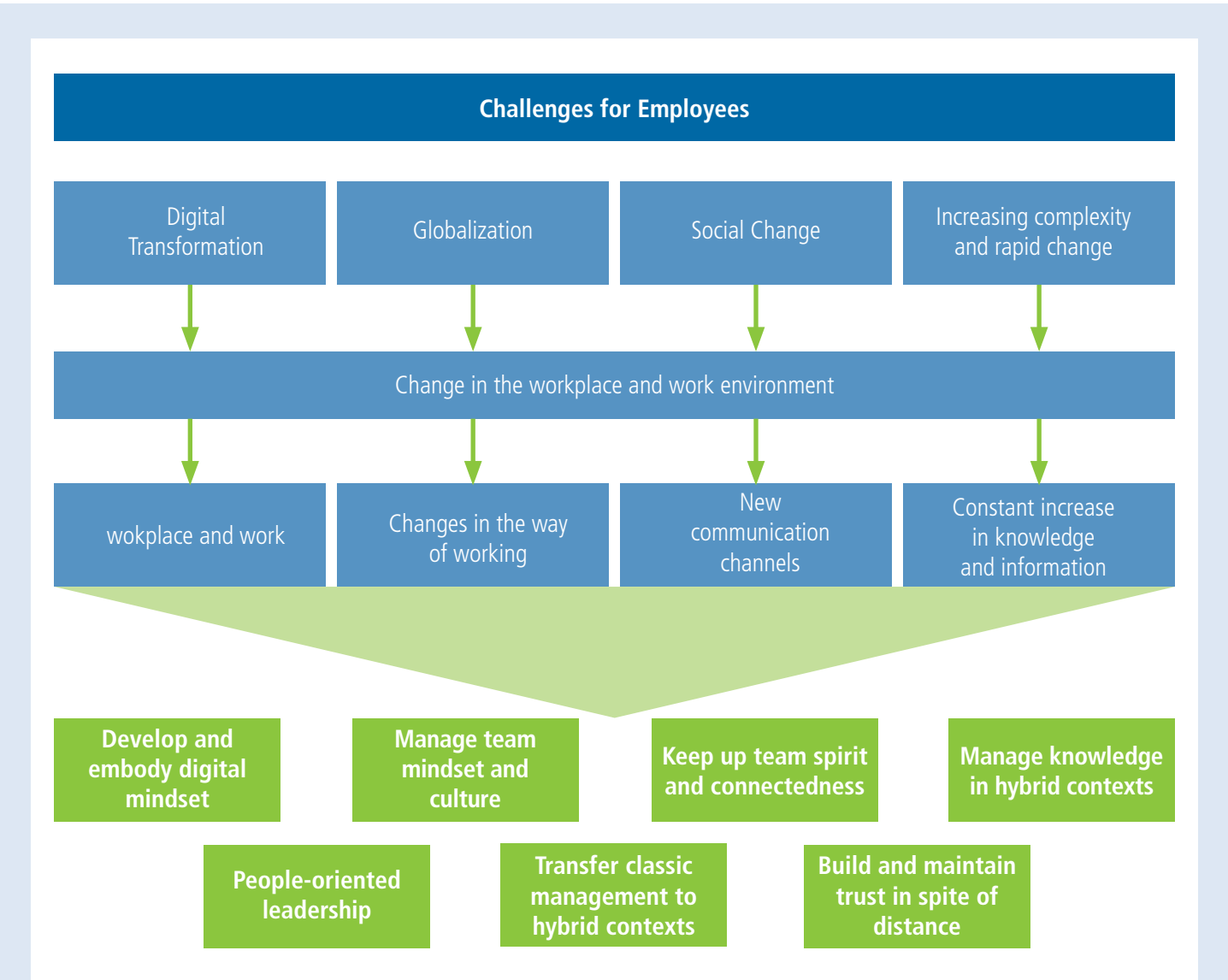


Figure 8: Challenges of Hybrid Teams – Management Perspective

Digital and People-oriented Mindset

Digital Mindset: Digital competencies such as „IT competence“ represent central leadership competencies of the digital age. Therefore, managers of hybrid teams are also faced with the challenge of building and continuously developing a digital mindset. In a first step, this includes being open and eager to embrace digitization and its effects with a pronounced **digital attitude**. In a second step, it also includes possessing a pronounced **digital understanding**, which is characterized by a sound knowledge and content-related understanding of digitization and its interrelationships. Finally, a third significant component is represented by **digital behavior**. This is represented by an effective, reflective, and ethical way of acting and dealing with digital issues. The need for this kind of digital behavior arises from the fact that it is not enough to stop at the level of a digital attitude and a digital understanding, but that it is much more important to take this to the digital road by translating it into appropriate action (cf. Liebermeister, 2019). Here, it is essential to emphasize that digital behavior is not only related to one’s own actions, but also includes tolerating the digital actions of others. (ibid.)

People-oriented Mindset: In addition to the development of such a digital mindset, a key requirement for managers is to make people – as drivers and implementers of digitization – the special focus of their actions. Liebermeister (2019) identifies becoming a first-class **judge of character** as a significant task related to this which, in addition to an understanding and knowledge of the needs of employees, also includes the creation of an appreciative culture. For this purpose, it is essential to train the necessary competencies, which consist, for example, of active listening and honesty, in order to create the prerequisite for more effective and sustainable leadership, not least with knowledge of and respect for the needs of the employees.

Managing Team Mindset and Team Culture

Another challenge is the development of shared contextual knowledge as a prerequisite for comprehensive knowledge transfer. This calls for special sensitivity in communication in order to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts when knowledge is transferred across social, organizational, and cultural boundaries. (Leitner & Tuppinger, 2004)

In addition to such challenges to building a team culture, which result from a heterogeneity in the environment of the team members and possibly also from their different cultural backgrounds, the sometimes daily changing online and offline composition (cf. Bernardy et al., 2021, p. 120) of hybrid teams further complicates their formation of a team culture. Restricting the possibility of comprehensive face-to-face communication to a part of the team means that the development of team cognitions and emotions can be very different among the team members (ibid.).

Related to this, Weise (2021) emphasizes coming up with new ways to create a location-independent cohesive workplace culture that promotes collaboration and effective communication as a key challenge for the leader.

Thus, an important focus is also on contributing to a **sense of psychological safety** through the design of such a supportive culture, which is determined by the team members’ perception of being able to interact openly and authentically with each other (ibid.).

Management (Governance)

In the same way, new forms of media-mediated personal interaction between managers and employees mean that employees are no longer in the manager’s direct sphere of influence and due to the given spatial distance, to a certain extent are also beyond the manager’s direct control. This makes it mandatory to rethink direct management behavior with classic guidelines and structures in favor of a management approach based on trust and empowering employees to act independently. (Kunze et al., 2021)

Fair relations with all employees also play an important role in building trust. In this regard, the phenomenon of „proximity bias“ should be mentioned as a particular challenge. In the context of hybrid teamwork, it leads to the perception that office-based employees are more productive in their work, which consequently means that they are more often considered in the selection process for important tasks and roles. This is due to the fact that people who are physically close to us and whom we see more often are also more memorable to us. (Petrick-Löhr, 2021)

Even though the trust and independent actions of the employees are becoming increasingly important here, it is important for the collaboration of hybrid teams to establish corresponding processes and joint agreements and to create clear structures for the collaboration. Thus, organizational differences can be counter-balanced and the focus can be on the actual task at hand. Here, a central challenge for the manager is to find an appropriate balance in order to avoid the definition of such standards stealing room for the creative and the new. (Hermann et al., 2012)

Leadership (Inspiration)

Finally, the spatial distance to employees in hybrid collaboration also brings challenges for the manager in **building substantial, goal-oriented, and personal leadership relationships** (Kunze et al., 2021).

In this respect, a division into face-to-face and virtual work situations also makes it more difficult to **develop shared mental models**, while at the same time these are of great importance for the collaboration of hybrid teams (Bernardy et al., 2021).

In this context, shared mental models mean collective knowledge structures of a team, which, according to Bernardy and colleagues (2021), include the following elements:

Elements of Shared Mental Models	
Situational Understanding	Common understanding of the current situational requirements
Shared Task Models	Common understanding of the upcoming goals, strategies and tasks
Shared Team Models	Common understanding of the roles and responsibilities within the team
Shared Temporal Models	Common understanding of temporal interdependencies
Shared ICT Models	Common understanding of the use of digital media

Table 1:
Elements of Shared Mental Models, own figure
based on Bernardy et al., 2021, P. 119

Managing Knowledge in Hybrid Contexts

Finally, knowledge management also poses special challenges for managers. In addition to the opportunities presented by the spatial distribution of team members in hybrid teams for the bundling of core competence carriers (cf. Leitner & Tuppinger, 2004, p. 12) and the integration of specialized and expert knowledge across large spatial distances (ibid.), this simultaneously harbors challenges, particularly related to the more difficult establishment of social relationships and trust (Webster & Wong, 2008). In this context, Bernardy and colleagues (2021) highlight team cohesion and trust as key success factors of virtual teamwork, as these also lead to a higher motivation to share knowledge with each other and in the same way induce more effective communication. Moreover, a concentration of virtual communication on primarily task-related information results in negative effects for an open exchange of knowledge due to the influence that a disregard for the relationship level has on the formation of team emotions (ibid.). Last but not least, the challenge of an online and offline composition (cf. ibid., p. 120) in hybrid teams, which changes on a daily basis, has already been pointed out – it can lead to disparities in the flow of information and involvement in the team (ibid.).

The formation of shared mental models is particularly important in the context of the many positive effects attributed to them. Among other things, they contribute to a reduction of the need for communication and of existing uncertainties in dealing with one another, and they also enable team members to explain and predict the behavior of others. Thus, they support efficient collaboration and thus team effectiveness and, in the same way, enable implicit coordination of the team. (ibid.)

As mentioned before, the formation of such shared mental models poses a particular challenge in hybrid teams. In the context of increasing virtual collaboration, this can be justified by a reduced frequency of communication as well as an exchange that is primarily related to factual and technical topics. Thus, it leads to an intensive exchange, in particular at the beginning of the teamwork, as well as common experiences, which are particularly important for the formation of shared models, are often only possible to a limited extent. (ibid.)

3.3 Challenges for Organizations

After the previous consideration of specific challenges for the leadership and the members of hybrid teams, we now take a look at special challenges that arise for the organization.

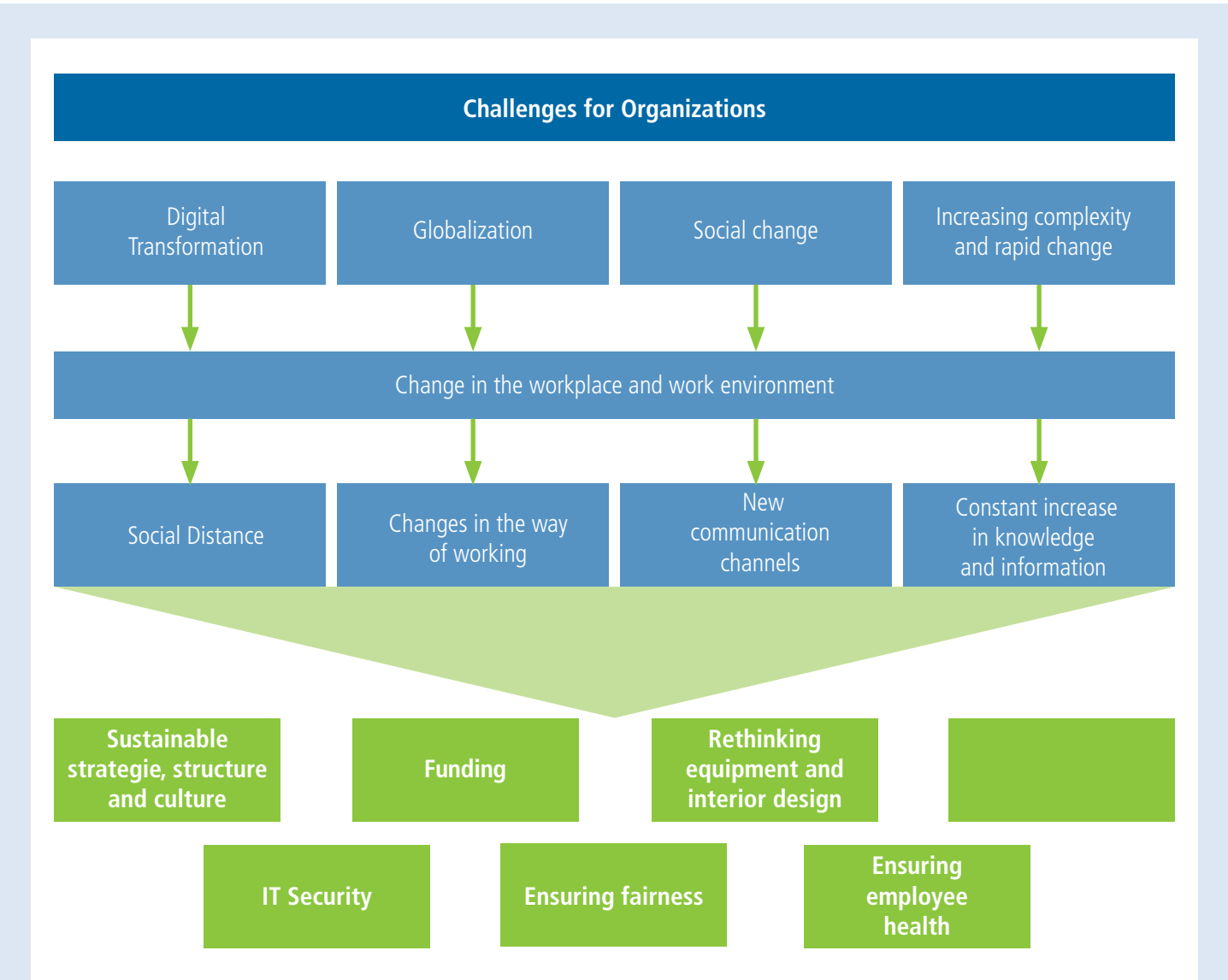


Figure 9: Challenges of Hybrid Teams – Organizational Perspective

Sustainable Strategy, Structure, and Culture

In this respect, changes brought about by digital transformation, globalization, and social change force organizations to develop sustainable strategies and, in this context, to rethink and implement existing communication structures and team cultures. This includes requirements for the design of flexible working time models, since increasingly virtual collaboration in hybrid teams means that fixed temporal and spatial boundaries of work are being dissolved and thus, the classic „nine-to-five job“ is becoming more and more obsolete (Papasabbas & Henkel, 2015).

Having already mentioned the phenomenon of proximity bias, it is particularly important to consider equal and fair treatment of all employees in the context of increasing virtual collaboration.

This is also linked to the requirement of dealing with **new systems for measuring performance** due to the spatial and temporal flexibility of employees. Simultaneously, the design of such an open, trust-based evaluation culture focusing on results and jointly achieved goals instead of attendance times offers opportunities for the company to attract and retain passionate employees and new talent. (Trapp, 2021)

IT Security

With the growing importance of digital communication media due to the introduction of hybrid teams, specific challenges related to the consideration of IT security arise. Here, organizations are initially confronted with the fundamental question of whether and, if so, what data should be recorded at all in what kind of process flows. They must also decide whether and, if so, which personal data of customers and of employees should be stored.

Rethinking Equipment and Interior Design

Beyond IT security, digital communication media for collaboration in hybrid teams also imply new requirements for the design of on-site office space. Depending on the form of the hybrid team, companies must decide if there is still a need for traditional individual offices and are required to develop customized solutions for their own company.

Another important aspect is to ensure the necessary funding for these new spatial requirements, as well as the funding of secure hardware and software solutions and their regular updates for all employees.

Ensuring Employee Health

While the preservation of mental health has already been mentioned as a specific challenge for employees, ensuring the health of employees is also a central requirement at the organizational level.

A corresponding need for action is evident not least in the results of a survey conducted by the Fraunhofer IAO and the German Society for Human Resource Management (DGFP), in which 70% of the respondents report perceiving negative effects on employees as a result of a loss of boundaries (Hofmann et al., 2021).

Thus, companies are faced with the challenge of designing a work environment that is as stress-free as possible, as well as determining clear guidelines that help promote a people-friendly work environment.

However, results of a study conducted by Capterra among 299 respondents reveal that only 39% of employers in Germany asked their employees about their well-being in the home office. This compares to 54% of employers who have not spoken to their employees about their psychological well-being. (Bahr, 2021)

Assuming Social Responsibility

Regarding their social responsibility, organizations have to deal with a number of central issues when it comes to working together in hybrid teams, not least of which is the question of which people should have the opportunity to work from home. In this context, it is also important to consider the extent to which this enables or denies opportunities for increased gender equality or a better balance between family and career, e.g.



Chapter 4 What Managers and Employees Need

The growing collaboration in hybrid teams with the specific characteristics and challenges described above ultimately also implies extended requirements for the members and leaders of the teams (Leitner & Tuppinger, 2004; Bernardy et al., 2021). Therefore, the following chapter first considers the essential competence requirements for members of hybrid teams on the basis of the **7 must-haves of the hybrid team member**.

4.1 What Employees Need

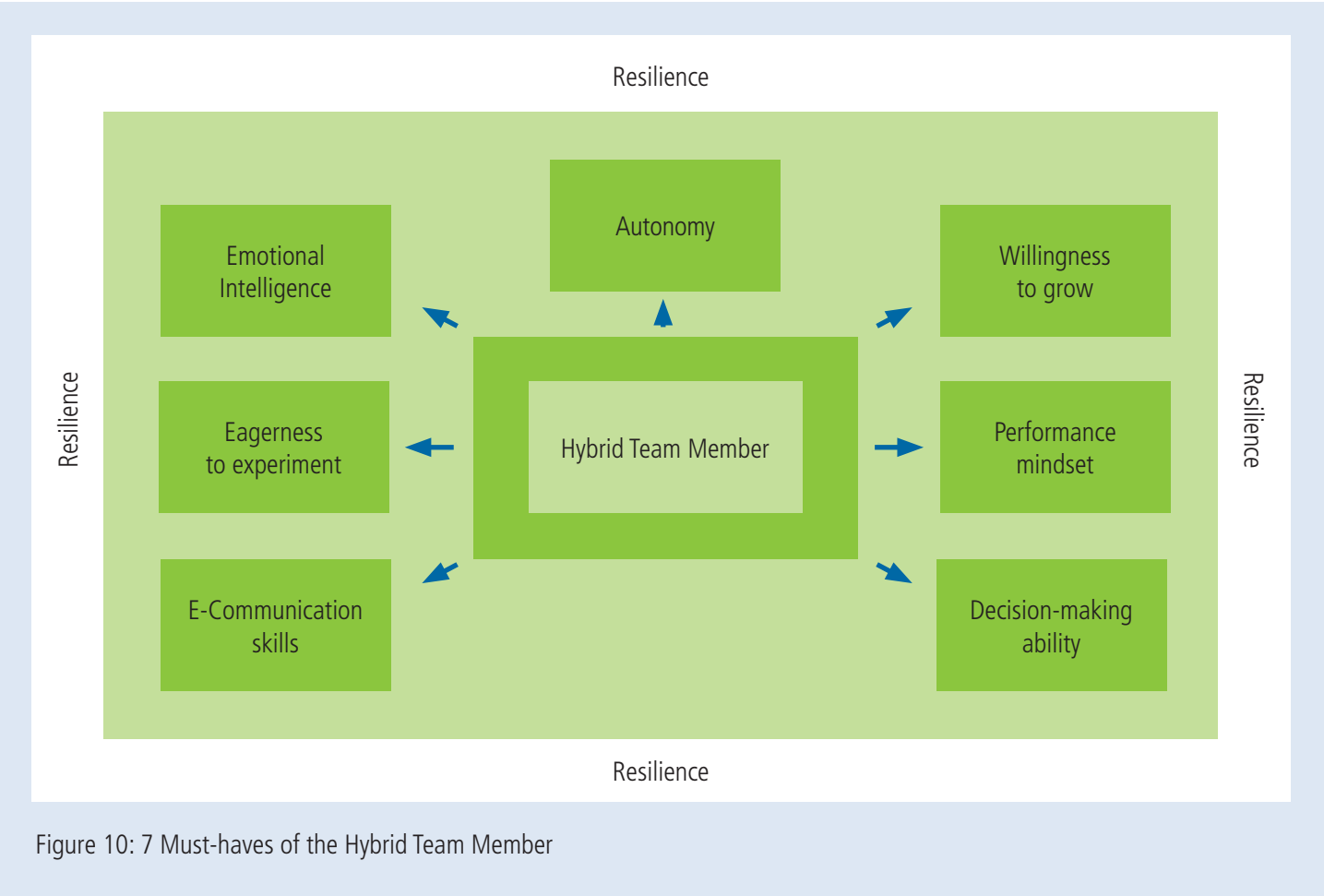


Figure 10: 7 Must-haves of the Hybrid Team Member

Decision-making Ability

With a higher degree of freedom and of ambiguity of tasks and goals in virtual collaboration, the decision-making ability of employees is becoming increasingly important. It is the ability to actively and self-determinedly fully perceive various possibilities of action for the fulfillment of a task or an assignment (cf. Mair, 2015). It also includes the competence to realize independent and creative objectives and is characterized by a focus on the essentials and a clear prioritization. (ibid.)

Eagerness to Experiment

The eagerness to experiment as a further core ability of the hybrid team member is characterized by the joy of dealing with new, open as well as conflict-prone problem situations, which also includes the testing of different communication and cooperation variants in coping with social challenges. An essential factor here is the confidence that the confrontation with new contentual and, in particular, social situations will bring benefits for the individual team member, the group and the company. In order to bolster the eagerness to experiment, it is important that the contentual and social environment can be perceived as open to the future and malleable, which in turn presupposes social curiosity, the joy of and the ability to design as well as a „constructive imagination“. (ibid.)

Performance Mindset

The increasing autonomy of employees in the execution of their activities also implies a need for them to formulate their own creative objectives that enable them to act in a results-oriented manner by consciously focusing on them.

The characteristics of the performance mindset are a remarkable willpower, perseverance and active pursuit and realization of the respective goals. At the same time, result-oriented action is based on solid technical-methodical knowledge as well as on experience and complex skills. (ibid.)

A person’s performance mindset is furthermore characterized by the fact that only clear results lead to their satisfaction, and this actively and consistently influences all partial aspects of anything they do to reach that goal (ibid.).

All this characterizes performance mindset as a conscious decision aimed at combining professional and methodical knowledge as well as action drive, orientation, execution and control as an overarching functional unit (cf. ibid.).

Autonomy

Also, a decrease in the structuring and controlling contribution of management implies increased demands on self-management (cf. Bernardy et al., 2021, S. 126). This also enhances the importance of confidence in one’s own abilities, as well as the need for a high degree of self-discipline in order not to be distracted, especially when in home office. (ibid.)

Furthermore, in the context of increasing personal responsibility, an essential competence of the members of hybrid teams is **self-motivation**. Linked to this is the ability to set one’s own goals, but it also involves being able to create rewards for oneself for good performance and to visualize and make them transparent for oneself. Finally, the ability to self-motivate can also be considered in the context of being able to create an agreeable working atmosphere for oneself. Likewise, one’s own motivation can be promoted by successfully developing time routines that are best suited to one’s own performance and, if necessary, one’s own family situation. Last but not least, self-motivation also goes hand in hand with the **self-management ability**. If we are able to identify the tasks that are mandatory to complete in a day, we create an important basis for rewarding ourselves for the goals achieved after doing so. In order to prevent possible frustration due to technical failures, the optimization of our technical equipment can also be considered a component of self-motivation in a broader sense. (Kunze et al., 2021)

Emotional Intelligence

According to Meyer and Gölzner (2018), emotional intelligence is the ability to be both engaged with the emotions of others and at the same time have one’s own values and goals in mind. It is the art of being able to deal with this polarity. (cf. Meyer & Gölzner, 2018, p. 25). In this context, according to Goleman and colleagues (2006), four core elements of emotional intelligence can be determined:

- self-awareness
- social awareness
- self-management
- relationship management.

These emerge as quadrants from the composition of an ego-other axis and a cognize-go axis (Meyer & Gölzner, 2018). From this, self-awareness is related to a deep understanding of one’s emotions as well as one’s values, goals, and dreams (Goleman et al., 2006), while self-management is related to the ability to appropriately manage one’s emotions (Meyer & Gölzner, 2018). Social awareness is further about recognizing the emotions of others, whereas relationship management refers to the ability to manage these emotions well (ibid.). The following graphic illustrates these four dimensions once again:

ALSO, A DECREASE IN THE
“STRUCTURING AND CONTROLLING
CONTRIBUTION OF MANAGEMENT”
IMPLIES INCREASED DEMANDS
ON SELF-MANAGEMENT.

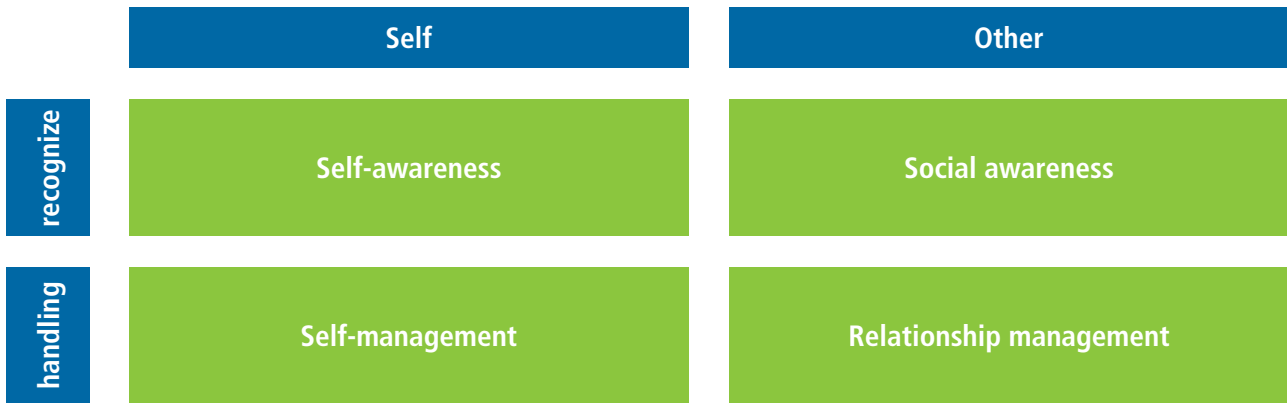


Figure 11: The Four Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence, own graphic based on Meyer & Gölzner, 2018, S. 25

Willingness to Grow

That work-related knowledge and social relationships in the work-place – whether with colleagues, superiors or customers – have an ever shorter half-life and that work equipment and targets are replacing each other at an increasing pace (cf. Korunka & Kubicek, 2013, p. 21) leads to the need to constantly adapt to new things (ibid.).

In this context, the individual willingness to develop and learn is of central importance. It is characterized by the commitment to acquire missing technical and methodological knowledge as well as job-specific qualifications and experience by participating in appropriate further training measures or in other ways. Willingness to grow also includes „learning on the job“ as well as „learning in the social environment“. (Mair, 2015)

A person’s willingness to grow is expressed in the fact that they learn with a high level of self-motivation as well as a high level of voluntary commitment. An essential prerequisite for a high willingness to grow is an openness to new things as well as an active interest in the experiences of others. (ibid.)

E-Communication Skills

Bernardy and colleagues (2021) identify a sure instinct for the appropriate language in communication via virtual media (cf. Bernardy et al., 2021, p. 132) as well as a sensitivity for the perception of undertones in written communication and in telephone calls as the most important specific requirements for the communication skills of members of hybrid teams. Leitner and Tuppinger (2004) also highlight the corresponding ability to express oneself in writing, which is necessary in order to be able to transfer knowledge in text-based indirect communication.

Last but not least, special demands on communication skills are also linked to a heterogeneity of the team members’ environment, which requires a special sensitivity for the different conceptual worlds as well as working habits and environments with which the participants operate in their individual surroundings (ibid.). For the development of positive relationships within the team, Leitner and Tuppinger (2004) further stress the importance of the willingness to communicate informally via information and communication technologies.

These essential competencies of the hybrid team member are also supported in the results of a study by the Institute for Digital Transformation in Work, Education and Society. It identifies five key skills of hybrid team members:

- self-management
- self-motivation
- collaboration
- virtual communication skills
- digital literacy.

[Resilience]. In this context, it is important to understand that these competencies should not be viewed isolated from each other, but are embedded in a framework that reflects the need to deal with the constant changes in today’s workplace. In that respect, elements can be determined at different levels according to the following model, which in their interaction contribute to a high level of resilience:

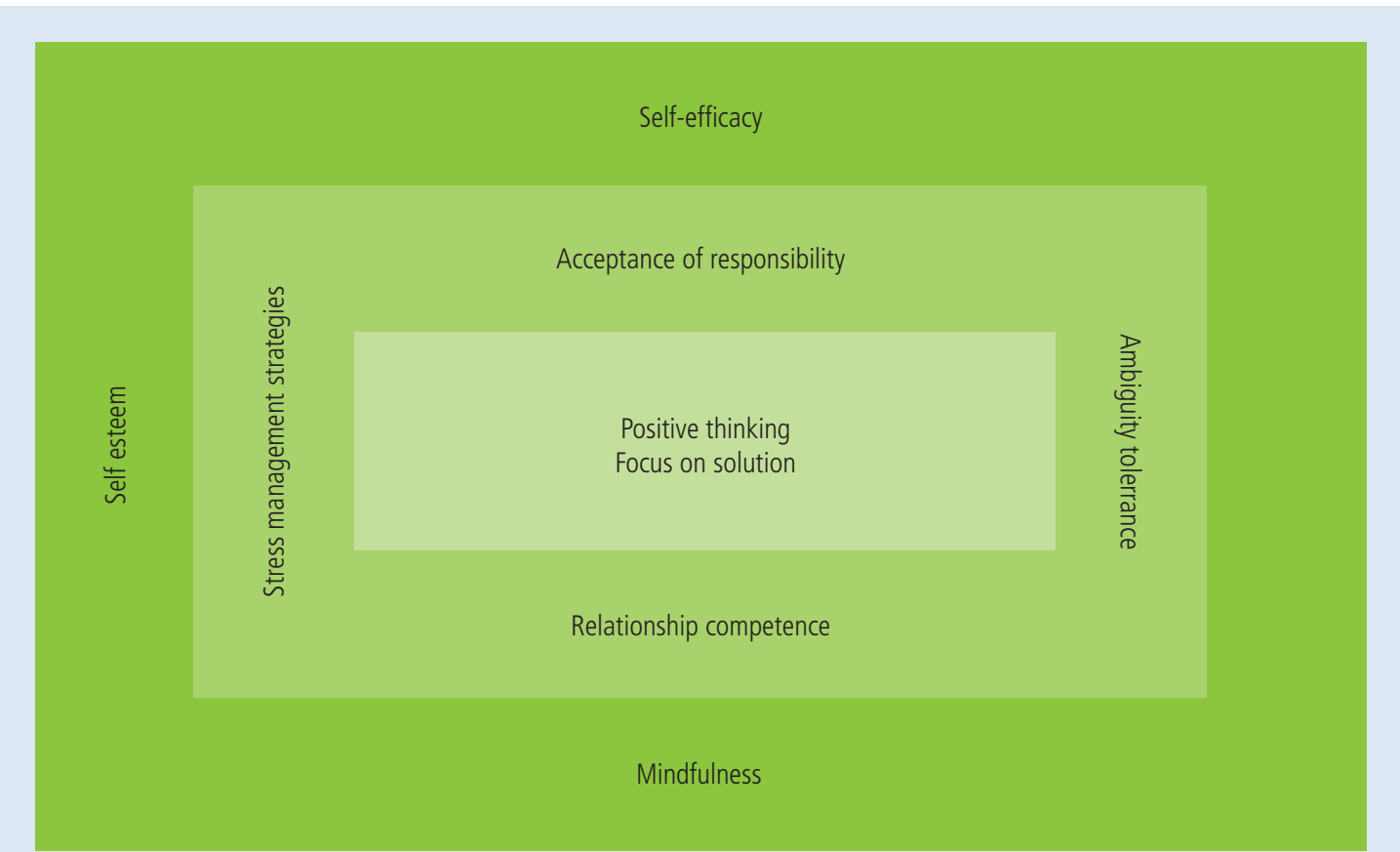


Figure 12: Levels of Resilience, own graphic based on Seitter & Bott, 2017; Greve et al., 2016

First of all, at the level of mindset or basic attitudes, positive thinking and focus on solutions are significant (Greve et al., 2016). These are characterized by a clear picture of one’s own future, which is used to establish positive and measurable goals.

On the higher level of skills, essential elements are a high ambiguity tolerance, the acceptance of responsibility, relationship competence, and the availability of stress management strategies (Seitter & Bott, 2017).

These defining basic attitudes and skills are embedded in a framework of other significant characteristics, e.g. a mindful approach to oneself and one’s self esteem (ibid.)

Of importance here are the parallels that become visible between the defining characteristics of a high resilience and the essential competencies of the hybrid team member considered earlier.

4.2 What Managers Need

In addition to these competencies, which are specific requirements for the members of hybrid teams, this form of collaboration also requires special skills on the part of the manager. In the following model, the **7 Ds of hybrid leadership** are used to define key competencies in the areas of dynamization, dialog, digital competence, discipline, diversity sensitivity, distance bridging and delegation. In the following paragraphs, we will examine each of these competencies in detail in order to derive concrete tasks for the management of hybrid teams in connection with the respective competency.

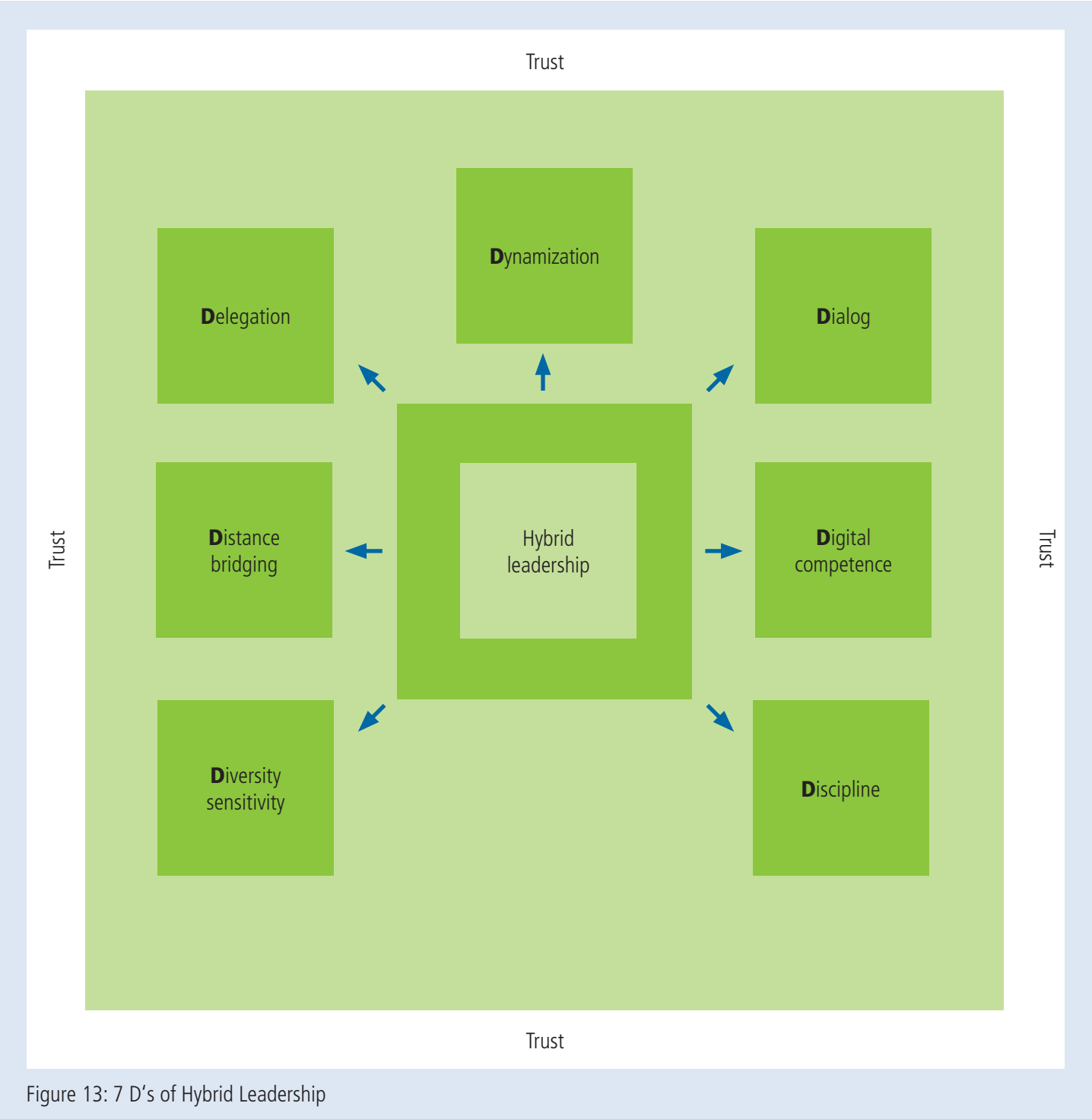


Figure 13: 7 D's of Hybrid Leadership

Diversity Sensitivity

The element of diversity sensitivity implies an attitude on the part of the manager in which they regard everyone as equally important and thus, show respect and appreciation for the different strengths and individual personalities of each employee. It requires the manager to show openness to other perspectives and an awareness of theirs and to develop an awareness of their

own cultural imprint and their own strengths and weaknesses. Finally, it is important to critically question these own perspectives and (unconscious) biases and, in doing so, to encourage others to reflect critically as well. Thus, the diversity sensitivity of a manager is fundamentally characterized by the fact that they are „color blind“.

Distance Bridging

For the collaboration of hybrid teams the **presence** of the manager is essential in bridging the spatial distance. For the manager, this is linked to the task of making their own identity visible and actively shaping it in order to be perceived both online and offline. Against this background, according to Hildebrandt and colleagues (2013), a distinction can be made between the three forms of social, cognitive, and leadership presence. Social presence is primarily about „feeling“ or „empathizing“, which can be expressed in virtual interaction mainly through affective reactions, such as emotions or humor, engaging reactions, and referring reactions, such as direct quotation. In contrast, cognitive presence is related to „understanding“ and thus describes the human ability to draw meaning and knowledge from a process of reflection and communication in a virtual setting. Finally, leadership presence brings together social and cognitive presence and provides a sense of direction in both the analog and the virtual by proactively ensuring that the technical and cultural conditions are in place for the group to interact. (Lippold, 2021)

[Empathy.] It is important to stress the ability to empathize as an essential element of the ability to bridge distance. Its role and impact on workforce satisfaction and collaboration were examined in detail in the „Work Reworked“ study by Microsoft, KRC Research, and the Boston Consulting Group (Hartwich, 2021).

Empathy in this context is the ability to connect and empathize with others, which is especially necessary to understand the new realities employees face in hybrid collaboration and to be able to support them with individual challenges. A leader’s empathic behavior is equally characterized by taking time with employees and actively listening to them and asking questions. (ibid.)

According to this study, the main positive effect of empathic leadership is increased employee satisfaction, and empathy contributes to more open and proactive action on the part of the employees. Thus, empathic leadership also promotes efficiency. (ibid.)

This refers to another essential competence in the **Individual Consideration** of the employees, which arises as a special requirement from the reduced personal contact, in order to continue to convey a feeling of appreciation to the employees (Bernardy et al., 2021).

[Setting goals]. Finally, in the context of a reduced control as a result of physical distance, it is also important to note the importance of the leaders’ ability to steer the members of their team toward a common goal. In order to be able to successfully lead with goals, a low need for control on the part of the manager is required, as well as a composure in dealing with different paths chosen by the employees to achieve the respective goal. In this respect, it is important to communicate these goals plausibly to employees beforehand and to ensure clear and precise formulations in the goal-setting process in order to ensure that employees are also aware of their goals and can internalize them. Goal-oriented leadership is also characterized by the fact that the determination of goals is based on the active use of the factual, methodological and value knowledge required for this purpose. This is especially crucial because to a large extent, the performance of the team depends on the quality of the goal-setting process. Another significant element of a successful imparting of goals to employees is the focus of a manager’s own actions on clearly defined goals and results instead of on spontaneous actions. At the same time, when it is necessary to modify the goals, it is essential to control this process as a manager and to create transparency about it. (Mair, 2015)

Implemented correctly, goal-oriented leadership allows team members a great deal of autonomy in the design of processes and thus has positive effects on job satisfaction.

Dialog

The ability to engage in dialog is another crucial element in the management of hybrid teams and is characterized by the capability to deal with employees' ideas and complaints in an outgoing, trustworthy and open manner. At the same time, it becomes visible in the ability to convincingly communicate one's own views, values, and norms, as well as in the clear justification of necessary work and actions. Finally, the ability to engage in dialog also stands for the power to gain sympathy and recognition when interacting with others. This is based on a basic attitude that is characterized by a „win-win attitude“ and „help-orientation“ towards the dialog partner. (Mair, 2015)

[Communication skills]. In close connection with dialog ability, communication skills should be mentioned as another essential element. They are a person's ability to communicate successfully with others and are demonstrated by being benevolent and open towards others and adopting an appreciative attitude towards dialog partners. They also include responding to one's counterpart and actively listening as well as reacting to possible objections in a factual and frustration-tolerant manner. Finally, communicative skills are expressed by being able to convince others through a strong identification with one's own arguments as well as through an understandable and target group-appropriate form of expression. (ibid.)

Digital Competence

According to the „European Framework of Digital Competences for Citizens“ (BigComp), digital competence as another central requirement of the management of hybrid teams can be subdivided into five topical areas (European Commission, 2020):

- information and data competence
- communication and cooperation
- development/creation of digital content
- security and data protection
- problem solving.

In a corresponding competence framework of the Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kultusministerkonferenz), which is based on this differentiation, various sub-topics are identified for each of the areas and specific behavioral anchors are highlighted. For instance, digital competence in the area of information and data competence includes the identification and consolidation of relevant sources. In the field of communication and cooperation, the aspect of „working together“ also involves the application of digital tools in the joint preparation of documents. (KMK, 2017)

Discipline

Discipline means the deliberate and self-determined action of the manager in accordance with accepted and personally acquired values and norms. Such an ability on the part of the manager includes the fact that they follow professional and methodical insights even with the prospect of unpleasant personal consequences and also take care of the formation of binding values in the company or team. Finally, discipline is also expressed through assistance in ensuring that values and norms are also implemented in practice by the other participants. (Mair, 2015)

With regard to knowledge management in hybrid teams, a concrete example would be documentation discipline in order to prevent an unequal distribution of information. This also reveals the specific role model function and the significant influence (**Idealized Influence**) that the manager has in exemplifying the behaviors that are important for successful collaboration in hybrid teams. (Bernardy et al., 2021)

Dynamization

Due to the increasing complexity of relationship networks in companies, the ability to inspire others with our own personality and ideas becomes more and more important (Liebermeister, 2021).

The significance of the ability to dynamize also reflects North and Maier's (2018, p. 10) important task of encouraging renewal, agile learning, and reflection for strategic knowledge management in order to support the further development of the team.

Furthermore, the ability to dynamize can also be seen in connection with an essential function of the manager in a role as **innovator** (Liebermeister, 2019). In the course of the constant changes brought about by digital transformation, a significant ability of the manager is to adapt their thinking and actions to the rhythm of change and in doing so, consistently question their own thoughts in order to be able to make room for new ideas and concepts. A certain amount of courage and curiosity is prerequisite for this ability to dynamize in order to successfully meet a requirement such as the one formulated by Liebermeister (2019) in the adjacent quote.

Delegation

The ability to delegate describes the manager's capability to allocate tasks in a meaningful way. The aim here is to contribute to an improvement in cooperation by transferring part of the personal responsibility to the employees, thus encouraging and stimulating them to work independently. Effective delegation of leadership tasks is associated with the requirement for the manager to be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their employees in a differentiated manner, which in turn enables them to find the right person for the right task. (Mair, 2015)

At the same time, a basic attitude of trust is significant in order for a manager to involve employees in responsibility without mistrust and to allow them to participate in decisions (ibid.).

This is related to a high level of trust in the ability of team members to handle tasks independently, which is a necessity due to the limited possibility of control (Bernardy et al., 2021).

To make the delegation of leadership tasks possible, one important task of the manager is to instruct the employees continuously and comprehensibly (Mair, 2015).

All these essential capabilities of the hybrid leader are embedded in a framework of deep mutual trust which forms the core of the hybrid team. According to Hermann and colleagues (2012), the manager's trust-based general attitude is characterized by the

Be more innovative than traditional, more revolutionary than evolutionary, more radical than moderate and above all more disruptive than optimizing.

cf. Liebermeister, 2019

assumption that the employees are willing to perform, that they want to realize the common goal and are committed to it, and that they inform the manager in case of deviations or difficulties so that the manager can intervene or readjust (cf. Hermann et al., 2012, p. 40).

The essential competencies considered earlier are supported not least by results of a survey conducted by the Institute for Digital Transformation in Work, Education and Society. In line with the model of the 7 Ds of hybrid leadership, it highlights five necessary key competencies:

- setting goals
- empathy
- communicating a vision
- managing structures, processes, and projects
- communication skills.



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Chapter 5

How Should Hybrid Teams be Led and Managed?

After the chapter 4 gave a more detailed insight into the essential competencies of the hybrid leader based on the 7 Ds of hybrid leadership, the aim of the following chapter is to establish a link for each of these competencies to actual tasks for the leadership and management of hybrid teams.

Diversity Sensitivity

In the context of managers' diversity sensitivity, a central task is the conscious handling of linguistic and cultural differences. Based on a sensitivity to the effects of different attitudes toward power and hierarchy, collectivism and individualism, uncertainty avoidance and risk-taking, dependence on contextual information, and different perceptions, this implies the selection of media that consider different needs of the various cultural imprints on communication and enable all team members to participate in the team's communication. It is also essential to create transparency about the different cultural contexts by using a flexible media mix. Thus, it is important for managers to show, even at a distance, an understanding of the local structures in which the team members operate and are judged, and to demonstrate that they are clearly aware of the specific situation of the individual team members. It is equally important to create mutual clarity about the meaningfulness of the peculiarities in action. Against the background of the greater importance of language skills in media-based communication, Hermann and colleagues (2012) also recommend to offer more opportunities for synchronous and spoken exchange. (Hermann et al., 2012)

In addition, a manager's sensitivity to diversity is of particular importance when they are faced with the task of forming and assembling a new hybrid team.

Delegation

In connection with the managers' ability to delegate, they have the important task to **empower** in order to provide the necessary framework conditions that are required to be able to successfully delegate tasks together with a high level of trust. If we see empowerment from this perspective, it is linked to the transfer of decision-making authority and responsibility by superiors to employees (cf. Bartscher & Nissen, 2018) and is expressed in a (largely) self-determined design of the work process, access to desired information, and intensified (task-related) communication with colleagues and superiors (cf. *ibid.*).

In order to show concrete possibilities for controlling the experience of significance, competence, self-determination, and influence – as significant factors in the experience of psychological

To support team members in thinking outside the box, managers can offer their employees the opportunity to spend a limited period of time in a relevant **interface area** to enable them to learn about the background, challenges, and perspectives of other interfaces. In addition to promoting mutual understanding and improving cooperation between the interfaces, this also allows employees to identify new strengths.

empowerment – based on this definition (Spreitzer, 2008), the idea of the **opportunity marketplace** will be examined in more detail below. Schrage and colleagues (2020) define the opportunity marketplace as a digital platform or virtual place where organizations offer their employees the chance for professional development, mentoring, project participation, and networking. In turn, it allows employees to take advantage of those opportunities that are of the highest importance to them.

Thus, opportunity marketplaces are intended to contribute to the possibility of designing successful exchange processes between companies and employees by ultimately also being shaped at their core by the question of how managers can support their employees in making better investments in themselves and how they can enable and encourage them to evaluate, select and take advantage of opportunities (*ibid.*).

In order to be able to delegate successfully, it is essential to support increased personal responsibility among employees by establishing regular and reciprocal feedback processes, for example in the form of a short „flashlight“ before a team meeting, in which the employees score different categories, such as the workload or the mood in the team, on a team board and then discuss the results. In addition to strengthening employees’ sense of responsibility, regular and in particular mutual feedback can also contribute heavily to promoting an open and honest culture and to improving the climate and cooperation.

Dialog

In connection with the managers’ ability to engage in dialog and communication, a central task is the development of a clear communication strategy. The first step is to set specific expectations for all employees in terms of accessibility, with Deligiannis (2020) also referring to the clear definition of working hours under this aspect. In addition to such an exchange on the question of when communication should take place, it is also essential to determine which communication should take place. In this context, it is imperative to establish common rules about which media should generally be used for communication and for what specific purpose they should be used. The next step should be considerations about which employees need access to which information and which employees should participate in which meetings. (Knight, 2020)

[Media Richness Theory]. Against this background, we should also reference the media richness theory with regard to the selection of a suitable communication medium, according to which the decision in favor of a medium is determined by the complexity of the task. Tasks that require a high level of knowledge and context to understand are associated with the need for a medium that offers opportunities for immediate feedback, a broad spectrum of expression, and a high degree of personalization. At the same time, successful knowledge transfer necessitates adapting the medium to the situation or task at hand. (Leitner & Tuppinger, 2004)

In order to support the development of mutual trust as a basis for effective and successful communication in the team, Minder (2020) further emphasizes the necessity of conducting a limited number of critical meetings in presence. One example would be the first meeting after the formation of a new team. Based on this, a schedule should be developed for holding regular face-to-face meetings to discuss work progress, goals, and processes in the team in a direct exchange.

Minder (2020) also draws attention to the importance of constant feedback (ibid.). The high importance of mutual feedback – also about internal processes and group cohesion – is likewise visible in the results of a study by Geister, Konradt and Hertel (2006) (Kunze et al., 2021).

Connection Between the Complexity of the Task and the Medium of Knowledge Transfer

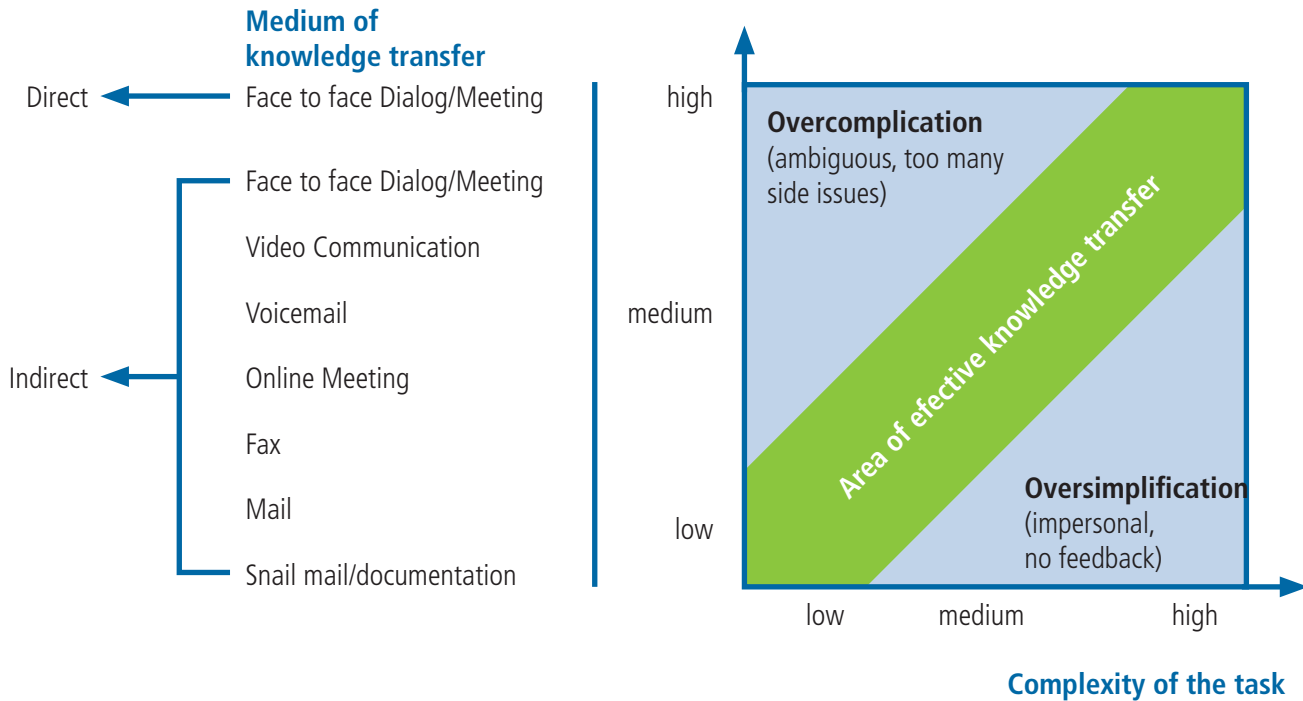


Figure 14: Connection Between the Complexity of the Task and the Medium of Knowledge Transfer, own graphic based on Leitner & Tuppinger, 2004, S. 250

[Communication in Virtual Meetings]. As part of the development of a communication strategy, special attention should also be paid to successful communication in virtual meetings.

For example, people in the same room using a shared screen can help to enable a better perception of informal communication. In addition, not using a chat box is helpful for avoiding parallel communication between individual participants that would create two different impressions of the same meeting. Similarly, it is important to prioritize face-to-face time for newcomers and freelancers, thus enabling their work to be made visible to supervisors and other team members.

Finally, it is essential to consider personal time for networking and relationship building, detached from business issues. The reason for this is the crucial role of social relationships created through informal interaction in gaining a voice at work. Lastly, significant attention should be paid to the design of clear rules for verbal exchange between participants. Thus, it should help reduce chaos while fostering a sense of inclusion. (West, 2021)

To ensure the formal flow of information and at the same time promote networking and personal exchange, it is important to create a significant anchor by establishing regular, fixed days on which the entire team meets in the office.

In addition, it is important to determine dates for regular virtual team meetings, which serve the crucial exchange between the team and the manager as well as an overview of the status quo of the current tasks and projects.

In order to gain further experience together with their team in dealing with the new digital possibilities and to use the opportunity to discover and test new tools, managers can organize a digital learning day. By embedding this in an appropriate framework – for example, by starting with a joint bingo game – it is also possible to contribute to strengthening the sense of identity and cohesion by organizing such a learning day.

cf. Lorenz, 2021

Digital Competence

In conjunction with a manager's digital competence, a particularly important task is to ensure that „the processes of the hybrid team are also mapped on the IT side“ (Görner, 2021). In this context, it is important to establish a digital collaboration tool, such as Planner in Microsoft Teams, to create the necessary structure and transparency for spatially and temporally flexible collaboration in distributed work organizations (ibid.).

At the same time, the digital competence of the manager also allows them to use the possibilities that such software offers for addressing different personalities in the team in a targeted manner (ibid.).

The development of an information technology infrastructure as central task is also supported by Minder (2020). She refers to the essential importance of a good technical infrastructure as a key element for the development of knowledge competence, in addition to the previously considered creation of transparency. She also highlights the significant opportunities it offers for the stringent exchange and networking of geographically separated team members and the establishment of norms and patterns.

A key challenge for and competence of the manager is to select the most appropriate system for their team, taking into account various factors such as the team size, so that it can be successfully adopted and understood by the team members (ibid.).

Discipline

Finally, a common understanding of the purpose and goal of the cooperation that aligns the team's actions is an important basis for building trust and solidarity within the team.

In this context, reference should also be made to the **Idealized Influence** of leaders acting as role models for the behaviors that are important for successful collaboration in hybrid teams (Bernardy et al., 2021).

[Parameters]. Orientation also needs appropriate parameters. According to Hermann and colleagues (2012), in order to ensure reliability, strengthen mutual trust and thus enable the development of working relationships that prove sustainable even in difficult and stressful times, agreements in the following areas are significant for the design of positive parameters:

First and foremost, **agreements on availability and reliability**. This includes, for example, defining core times for joint presence at the desk/PC, since despite the possibility of asynchronous processing of many things, there is always a need for direct exchange. Reliability in terms of mutual availability is therefore essential. In addition, arrangements for a required „logging off“ which also consider the handling of short absences are necessary. In order to ensure reliability for successful asynchronous communication, these agreements should also include clear rules regarding the obligation to get and deliver information. Last but not least, strategies to counteract information overload should be integrated into the relevant agreements.

In addition to agreements on accessibility and reliability, clear **agreements on document creation, file storage and calendar use** are essential. If such structures are not already in place in the company, the design and establishment of folder structures and usage rules is an important task in order to ensure uniform specifications for the use of a shared file repository. Also, working on a common document involves determining rules for handling different versions.

Last but not least, agreements on dealing with transparency and privacy, for example with regard to calendar entries, are also important.

It is also critical to reach clear agreements on **how to deal with team boundaries** and the team's environment. In this context, it is necessary, for example, to address the question of which criteria should determine the affiliation of individuals to the core team or, if applicable, to an extended one. Likewise, it must be clarified within the parameters of team-specific agreements how information will be handled and what external transparency the team would like to cultivate. It is a particular challenge to set oneself apart from other teams if there are individual team members who work in several teams.

Finally, the design of positive parameters for successful virtual collaboration includes **interaction agreements**. This relates to agreements on general processes and basic interaction in the form of team rules. An important aspect here is the inclusion of a rule for regular reflection on the way the team works together, which is particularly significant in virtual teams. Likewise, essential rules in this area concern the handling and management of conflicts.

When using Microsoft Teams, for example, a **Kanban Board** can help to create transparency about areas of activity and responsibilities as well as an understanding of the status of current tasks and projects. Using stickers in different colors, the individual team members can share relevant information concerning the various tasks.

Dynamization

In connection with the manager's ability to dynamize, the support of renewal, agile learning, and reflection (cf. North & Maier, 2018, p. 10) is an essential task for the management of hybrid teams. An important instrument is the design of working conditions encouraging to learning, which will be examined in more detail later in the excursus on knowledge management in hybrid teams.

[Team reflection]. Since the previously considered task points out the importance of reflection in addition to encouraging agile learning, we will now consider a specific tool for this, the **Team Check**. Reflection processes are significant because they support the development of shared mental models, the importance of which for successful team collaboration we described in detail in the previous chapter. The TeamCheck developed by Bernardy and colleagues (2021) offers the team a possibility to analyze the currently shared mental models as well as the possibility to investigate emergent states and behavior-oriented team processes.

In order to focus on the communication processes in the team during the reflection, a conscious observation of the current „communication setup“ can serve as good starting point. This setup is then reflected together. For this purpose, the frequency of meetings in the respective areas is recorded over a period of two to three weeks in a „meeting framework“, which considers different types of exchange – for example, the face to face or the team meeting. The goal is to identify core elements for the design of efficient team communication. From such conscious observation, an environment of inclusivity can arise.

[Development of virtual teams]. Such joint reflection processes not only support good teamwork, but also play an important role in the development of the team. For a detailed consideration of the specific challenges and tasks in the development of hybrid teams, the most well-known model for team development by the U.S. psychologist Tuckman (1964) will be used as a starting point from now on (Hofmann, 2021; Mortensen, 2015; Furst-Holloway et al., 2004; Warren, 2017; Corbitt et al., 2004):

The first phase in Tuckman's model (1964) is called **Forming**. It is characterized by team members getting to know each other and exchanging information about themselves and the tasks at hand. This phase also involves the establishment of mutual trust between team members and the identification of group goals and expectations. A unique challenge for hybrid teams in this phase is that as a result of limited opportunities for informal work-related and non-work-related exchanges, the development of trust becomes more difficult. Also, there is a risk of the formation of false stereotypes due to an incomplete exchange of information. To counteract this, the manager can set specific times for the team to get to know each other via a common digital platform. It is also important to ensure a clear definition of the project requirements.

AS A MANAGER,
IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT
TO ENSURE
A CLEAR DEFINITION
OF THE PROJECT
REQUIREMENTS.

In the second phase, the so-called **Storming**, commonalities and distinctions are revealed, and conflicts are no longer kept under the surface. This phase is about establishing appropriate roles and responsibilities among team members. The particular challenge in virtual teams lies in the fact that recourse to less rich communication channels favors misunderstandings and can thus contribute to the aggravation of conflicts. At the same time, conflicts can often be less visible and recognized in communication that takes place predominantly via digital media. Also, the different working contexts of the team members pose a challenge.

In order to meet such challenges, it is important to establish a successful feedback culture and to define the rules of collaboration. One specific example would be the agreement on common times for discussions in the group.

The focus of the subsequent **Norming** phase is on agreeing about ways of working together and sharing information. At the same time, a common team strategy is established, and the relationships within the team are developed further. A particular challenge for virtual teams in this phase is the development of norms regarding the way of communication, the speed and the frequency of feedback. A possible solution could be a written document with a compilation of all group norms, which is supported by the manager.

The focus of the fourth phase, **Performing**, is the work on the common project. In this phase, team members actively assist and encourage each other in the completion of the project. A special challenge for virtual teams is to make the contribution of each team member to achieving the common goal visible. To meet this challenge, it is important to ensure focus on the common goal through effective communication. To this purpose, regular status updates can be scheduled in which the employees exchange information on how far they have progressed with their respective tasks in the project.

[Decision Dynamics Assessment]. We will now examine a particular instrument, the Decision Dynamics Assessment that can be helpful in facing those specific challenges in the development of hybrid teams.

It is a valuable tool for performance prediction as well as for employee selection and development, because it can distinguish typical leadership behavior of the 20% top and bottom level performers. The Decision Dynamics Assessment was originally developed by two psychologists from Princeton and Yale University and today, after a process of continuous development, represents one of the most validated and performance-oriented tools worldwide. (Bugari & Gray, 2019)

Finally, the tool is of special significance for team development because it can compare the individual evaluations of the members with the team's profile and the benchmark report of the top 20% performers. Thus, it supports the triggering of discussions on the team's development opportunities by providing insights into misalignments. Based on such information, it allows the team to enter into a dialogue about diversity, group dynamics, possible tensions, strengths and areas for development of the team. (ibid.)

In this context, the analysis of the development potential can focus not least on the consideration of the competencies of empathy, ambiguity tolerance and collaboration, which are important for the cooperation in hybrid teams. By consciously promoting these competencies at the individual level and taking them into account as a criterion when selecting new employees, this makes a positive contribution to the development and effective collaboration of the entire team.

In order to support the learning process and the development of the team by sharing new ideas, problems and successes and celebrating joint successes, a team board can be set up, which is filled with pictures, stories, ideas and experiences by the members of the team as well as the manager themselves and, as an integral part of team meetings, provides an impetus for exchanging information about the collected topics.

Distance Bridging

Building trust and connectedness in the team is a crucial success factor for virtual teamwork, as it also leads to a greater willingness to share knowledge with one another and requires more effective communication (Bernardy et al., 2021). In order to promote the development of trust among employees, it is important to offer them managerial support, to inquire about their individual circumstances and also possible concerns in a sincere interest (Knight, 2020). In other words, it is important to give employees a sense that you are committed to creating a situation that is acceptable to each team member (ibid.). This also references the element of **Individual Consideration** of the transformational leadership model. Last but not least, trust is formed through fairness in the performance assessment of local team members and remote team members and in dealing with their different needs. Such fairness also includes creating transparency about how and what each team member contributes to the achievement of the overall goals.

[Management by Interdependence]. The following section will take a closer look at the concept of **management by interdependence**. The basic idea of this specific approach is to compensate for the spatial and temporal distance between project team members by increasing the sense of belonging (Hertel & Orlikowski, 2017).

For this purpose, it uses three different approaches: task interdependence, goal interdependence, and result interdependence (ibid.):

Task interdependence (importance of the individual for team success):
The endeavor to interlink the various subtasks of a project more leads to the need for team members to coordinate and communicate with each other. Thus, it supports increased communication as well as getting to know each other, just as it helps to strengthen the perceived importance of the individual for the team's success. This in turn is associated with positive effects on motivation. (ibid.)

Goal interdependence (keeping common goals present):
By making the goals of the various team members become more similar, the concept makes an important contribution to ensuring that success of the project is perceived as personally significant by all. When everyone pursues the same interests, a close interweaving of individual goals should further help to promote identification and a climate of trust.

Against this background, the responsibility of the manager to keep the common goals present despite spatial/temporal distance and to bring them again and again into the consciousness of the project members (cf. Hertel & Orlikowski, 2017, p. 345) becomes all the more important.

Result interdependence (common results of the project work):
The third and last aspect of management by interdependence, result interdependence, focuses on creating and emphasizing **joint results** corresponding to the formulated sub-goals of the project work. This can be done, for example, in the form of both financial and non-financial incentives that are offered as rewards depending on the performance of the project team as a whole. Result interdependence thus enables a sense that everyone is „in the same boat“ to strengthen identification and commitment to the project. (ibid.)

In order to strengthen the culture of trust and to promote an open dialog on critical topics even at a distance, the manager can encourage the establishment of a „Wall of Worries“ as a platform that allows employees to address personal concerns remotely. Such a platform also creates an opportunity for mutual assistance.

After the consideration of specific competence requirements for the leadership of hybrid teams with the previously determined tasks has shown central starting points for the management of hybrid teams, the following excursus will take a look at specific requirements and tasks in the area of knowledge management.

[Managing knowledge and information]. In this regard, Bernardy and colleagues (2021) point out how important task it is for the manager to maintain a good overview of the flow of information in the team and to actively control it.

They emphasize the particular importance of this task in the management of hybrid teams since the possibility of face-to-face communication is limited to a part of the team and thus causes inequalities in the distribution of information. Therefore, Bernardy and colleagues (2021) note the importance of involving and managing each individual team member in order to ensure the continuity of information despite different team experiences and to gain insights into the respective individual information status.

With particular reference to knowledge management, North and Maier (2018, p. 10) also identify encouraging renewal, agile learning, and reflection as a significant task and highlight the design of parameters that encourage learning as one of the tools there.

Gratton (2021) emphasizes the development of an awareness of the different requirements in terms of time and place that various tasks entail. She considers this in the context of the four productivity factors of energy, concentration, coordination, and cooperation and how they can be influenced by changes in work organization along the location and time axis. This is illustrated in the following using the example of the role of the strategist, for whom concentration in particular represents a decisive factor in the effective performance of their tasks. Accordingly, attention is paid to the time axis in order to enable strategists to focus on their task, such as the development of a business plan, over a longer time window without interruption by being independent of the schedules of others. Location thus becomes only a secondary consideration.

In order to manage knowledge successfully, one important management task is to motivate employees. In this context, motivation means the willingness to communicate and use knowledge. (Nerdinger, 2004).

[Hybrid work cultures in practice]. Having previously considered specific tasks in the key competency areas of the hybrid leader, the following example of the US company Dropbox is intended to illustrate specific possibilities for shaping a hybrid organizational and work culture in practice. The company used the pandemic as an opportunity to introduce a mobile work culture, which is characterized by the following five elements (Kunze et al., 2021, p. 133 ff.):

Virtual First for all individual tasks:
This principle specifies the virtual and decentralized sequence of all individual activities, which includes being able to choose the place of work and the working hours entirely freely. It also means ensuring that all processes and communications can be carried out digitally.

Offices only for collaboration and advanced training:
In addition, a significant element of Dropbox's hybrid organizational and work culture is represented by the fact that although there are still offices called „Dropbox Studios,“ these may only be used for collaboration and training. A special feature here is that Dropbox covers the costs of a coworking space for employees who do not wish to work entirely from home.

Fixed periods of time for synchronous meetings:
Setting up fixed blocks of four hours a day in which all meetings are to be held aims at preventing overload caused by constant synchronous meetings.

Experimenting with virtual collaboration tools:
In addition to the previous measures, Dropbox is also experimenting with the use of VR applications for virtual collaboration and the onboarding of new employees. Similarly, they experiment with the use of digital collaboration tools, some of which have been developed in-house.

The following excursus will serve to present some digital tools for supporting collaboration in hybrid teams in more detail.

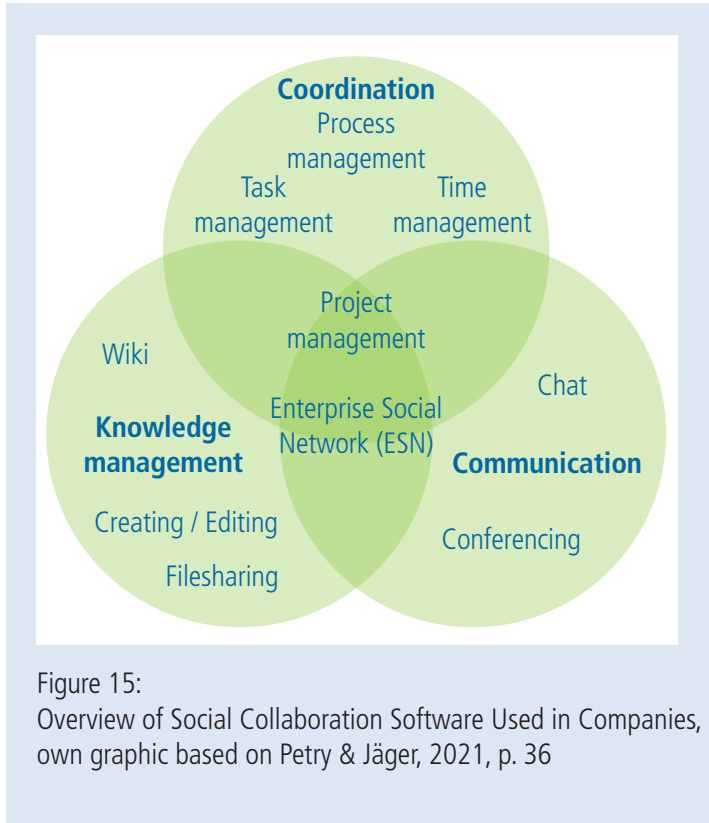


Figure 15:
Overview of Social Collaboration Software Used in Companies,
own graphic based on Petry & Jäger, 2021, p. 36

[Digital Tools for Collaboration in Hybrid Teams]. There is a variety of modern, internet-based software tools that can support collaboration in hybrid teams. They shape the way in which members of spatially distributed teams communicate, exchange information – internally, but also with suppliers and customers – and develop work results (Riemer & Schellhammer, 2019). Such digital platforms and tools, which are also referred to as „social collaboration software“ or „enterprise social software“, can be classified into three, non-distinct categories: **Communication, coordination, and knowledge management** (Petry & Jäger, 2021).

Used correctly, these tools can contribute significantly to overcoming the information overload and improving the information flow for employees in hybrid teams. This becomes all the more important after Chapter 3.1 showed that hybrid teams are faced with particular challenges here. It is important to use these tools deliberately. „The more, the merrier“ does not apply here, because if too many different tools are in use or it is unclear which tool should be used for what, employees will be swamped. This is why we continually highlighted the importance of defining common rules about which media should generally be used for communication and for which specific purpose they should be used.

Software Solutions for the Coordination of Tasks, Deadlines and Processes

With reference to the three categories defined above, the following section takes a closer look at tools that support the coordination of tasks, deadlines, and workflows (Petry & Jäger, 2021).

The use of **appointment management software** can help in planning and arranging appointments within a company as well as with customers. Specific examples include the Microsoft Office or Google Calendar. To make it easier for customers to arrange appointments for consulting or support, there are also various **online booking tools** such as Calendly or Microsoft Bookings. In order for such appointment management software to actually contribute to the aspect of discipline – as previously considered in this chapter –, it is important that all parties involved keep their calendars up to date. Thus, it is easier to find common times and, in the case of spontaneous queries, to check whether those are currently available.

Furthermore, **task management** solutions help teams keep track of tasks and responsibilities. A frequently used one is the Kanban Board mentioned earlier. It allows a transparent overview of all pending tasks and at the same time makes their progress visible. Specialized **tools for task management**, such as Atlassian, Jira or Trello, are also available for planning and coordinating tasks (Timinger, 2017). They support the planning and coordination of tasks in a variety of ways and thus go far beyond simple to-do lists (Capterra, n. y.; Albers, 2016):

- **Create tasks:** For the team and supervisors to have an overview of all pending tasks, these are recorded in the necessary level of detail in the task management tool. Often, special task types exist, for example for epics, user stories or bugs, in order to support different project management methods. One helpful functionality here is the potential to link tasks to each other. For example, this enables teams to map the completion of a specific task A as a prerequisite for the start with task B.
- **Prioritize tasks:** Tasks can be sorted by importance. Such prioritization helps the team to always focus on the most important tasks and the goals to be achieved. In addition, deadlines can be set by when tasks must be completed.
- **Visualize tasks:** The Kanban Board already mentioned and other task management tools offer a variety of graphical and tabular overviews of existing tasks and processing progress. These displays and, in particular, tools such as the Kanban Board can serve as a virtual meeting place for the team. Together, pending and completed tasks can be discussed. Additionally, many tools provide an option for configuring a personal dashboard for organizing one’s own tasks.

- **Distribution of tasks within the team:** In task management tools, tasks can be assigned directly to individual persons for processing, when information is requested or for review. Depending on how the team is organized, it is also possible for employees to take or „pull“ tasks from a task pool as soon as they have free capacity.
- **Work on tasks together:** Numerous functionalities support the joint work on tasks. For example, documents can be uploaded, information can be linked, checklists can be stored, or comments can be written. If tasks are documented thusly, it is easy to track what has been done so far. This can serve as a blueprint for completing comparable tasks. Many teams also use workflows and deliberately mark the status of a task, for example, „open“, „in progress“, „under review“, and „completed“. Task management tools often provide the option to be notified of new tasks and changes to existing tasks. This provides transparency about both processing status and responsibility.

Tools and Systems for Knowledge Management

Additionally, specific tools for knowledge management should support the collection, structuring and further development of knowledge within the team (Petry & Jäger, 2021). There are various possibilities for this. For instance, Microsoft SharePoint offers the possibility of jointly editing documents and web pages. So-called **creating or editing tools** such as Google Docs or Office 365 tools support teams in jointly creating and editing texts, presentations, or tables.

Other software solutions for knowledge management are **wikis** such as MediaWiki, which is also the technical platform of Wikipedia, or Confluence from Atlassian, which is used in many companies and can be integrated directly with Jira. Wiki pages can be effortlessly created and edited by employees. All changes to them are automatically logged and can be examined in a change history.

If necessary and with the appropriate user authorization, changes can be reversed at any point. In this context, file sharing tools such as Dropbox, Google Drive or OneDrive from Microsoft should be mentioned as well. They allow documents to be shared and edited on any device such as computers, notebooks, tablets, or smartphones, regardless of location.

Online whiteboards bring the functionalities of physical Meta plan walls and whiteboards into the virtual environment. Tools such as MURAL, Miro or collaboard support spatially distributed project teams in setting up a team whiteboard as described above and visually representing tasks, ideas, notes etc. Cards, sticky notes, icons, and images can be pinned and regrouped on these digital whiteboards. They also provide the ability to link additional information. The results can then be exported to common file formats and thus find further use in presentations, for example.

In addition, there are many tools that offer templates, for example the Business Model Canvas or a project retrospective. „Posters“ such as the Business Model Canvas are excellent for supporting interdisciplinary collaboration by creating transparency about the goal to be achieved jointly (Ehmer, 2017). The particular importance of such goal transparency has already been made clear in the context of the consideration of the concept of management by interdependence.

Communication Tools

Software such as Microsoft Teams or Slack support communication over spatial distances, including chats, telephone, and video conferences. The appropriate form of communication depends on the requirements. In the context of the media richness theory we previously demonstrated how important it is to take the complexity of the task into account when deciding on a medium.

In addition, a personal status indicator contributes to easier contact by making it transparent for the other team members whether someone is currently available, in appointments or absent. Finally, telephone or video conferences offer the option of screen sharing, for example, in order to jointly edit a file.

Last but not least, so-called channels can also be created in these tools and information can be collected in them. They also allow team members to be informed about new developments and usually include a facility for commenting on and responding to posts immediately. Thus, they enable questions to be addressed quickly. Furthermore, communication in such channels can contribute significantly to avoiding long e-mail chains and has the additional advantage that new team members also have access to the information stored there.



Chapter 6 What Really Matters

“Effective Leadership of a hybrid team, in essence, comes down to practising fairness and inclusiveness with every member of your staff, irrespective of where they are working.”

Deligiannis, 2020

as required. Nevertheless, Lee (2014, quoted according to Minder, 2020) stresses that elements of transformational and transactional leadership lend themselves well to hybrid environments and is essentially supported by Purvanova and Bono (2009), who for their part highlight a positive correlation between transformational leadership and the performance of virtual teams. According to Balthazard and colleagues (2009) a reduction in team isolation, increased team bonding, and a sense of appreciation which are associated with this leadership style are significant for such a positive correlation.

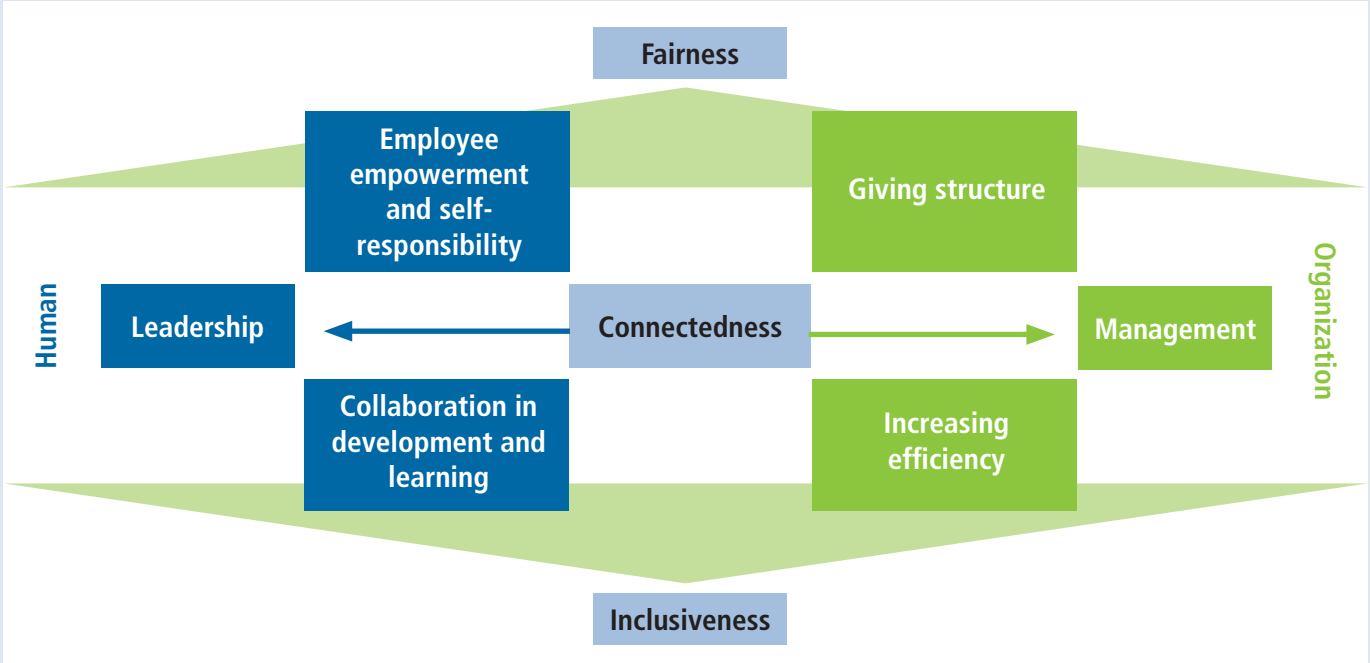
Likewise, transformational leadership enables the establishment of a significant balance between a focus on business development on the one hand and people-oriented tasks, such as team building and coaching, on the other hand (Winkler & Bramwell, 2021).

The importance of such a link is also expressed by the principle of ambidexterity. This is represented by the ability of executives to act with both hands: with one hand (as a leader), they encourage their employees to be creative and innovative and increase their self-responsibility, while at the same time, with the other hand (as a manager), they ensure the team performance by designing efficient structures. (Görner, 2021)

Based on the previous considerations, Minder (2020) emphasizes that no one true universal leadership style can be determined for the management of hybrid teams. Rather, it is important to combine elements of several leadership styles for the effective collaboration of hybrid teams and to apply them appropriately and

The following figure gives a detailed overview of the central elements that need to be integrated in the simultaneous roles as leaders and managers:

Figure 16: Connectedness, own graphic based on Görner, 2021



Learning to be this ambidextrous can be seen as a central requirement in order to lead hybrid teams in a way that is as context- and person-oriented as possible and to be able to deal with their particular complexity in a flexible manner (ibid.).

Finally, a manager who succeeds in managing the hybrid team ambidextrously is able to exploit a wide range of opportunities that are linked to this form of collaboration in the same way as the challenges discussed above. The following paragraph offers a detailed consideration of the special possibilities of hybrid teamwork.

Opportunities

After we initially showed the special importance for a discussion of the management and leadership of hybrid teams with the reference to corresponding studies, the development of sustainable hybrid organization and work models, which take into account the previously considered essential elements, is ultimately also associated with diverse opportunities.

The „Hybrid Work Compass“ study by the University of St. Gallen, Novu Office and HR Campus identifies key opportunities in the following six aspects (Berger et al., 2021, p. 15):

Key Opportunities

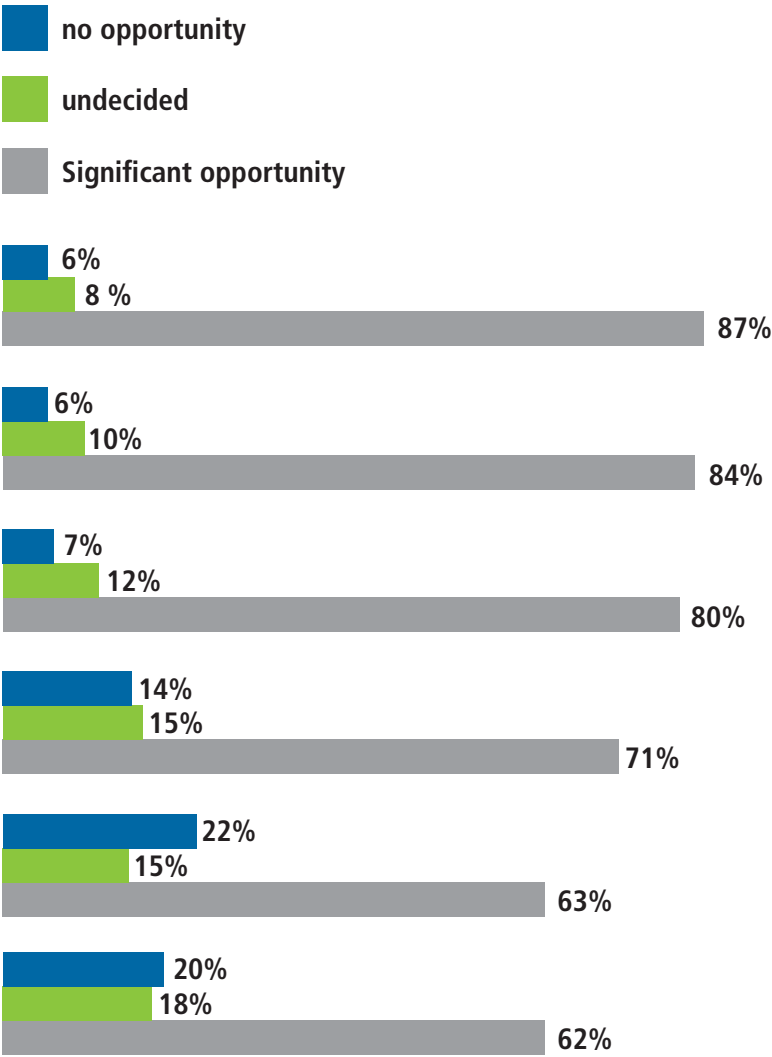


Figure 17: Opportunities Offered by the Collaboration in Hybrid Teams, own graphic based on Berger et al., 2021, p. 15

Accordingly, 87% of respondents see an increase of **employer attractiveness** in connection with hybrid work models. Also, 84% see a **significant opportunity** in the added value that hybrid work models bring **for employees** in that they allow them more time for family and friends (by eliminating the need to commute to work). Similarly, 80% perceive a higher **employee motivation** as a significant benefit of hybrid work models. Such benefits are associated in particular with increased flexibility and a higher degree of autonomy that these work models offer to employees. Furthermore, the assumption of **social responsibility** by companies, which are related to a benefit for the environment due to a lower number of commuters, is also perceived as a positive effect.

Similarly, the opportunity for **cost savings** through a reduced need for office space is highlighted as an opportunity on the business side. Last but not least, a significant benefit associated with increased geographic reach is also pointed out in terms of attracting **top talent**.

With such positive effects as have been pointed out with regard to the motivation of the employees, a special benefit for the manager is associated with this in the same way.

Opportunities for Knowledge Management

In addition, there are specific opportunities for knowledge management. According to Leitner and Tuppinger (2004, p. 12), the first of these is the **pooling of core competence carriers** (cf. Leitner & Tuppinger, 2004, p. 12), which arises as an opportunity from the use of modern information and communication technologies that make it possible to **integrate special and expert knowledge** even across large distances (ibid.). In this regard, it is important to point out the special significance of corresponding core competencies for competitiveness in the process of knowledge-based value creation (North, 2021). Bernardy and colleagues (2021) support this statement by referring to the possibility of global team formation and **spatially independent integration of talents**, which is a benefit of the spatial and temporal flexibility created by virtual collaboration. In addition, as a consequence of spatial flexibility, a higher degree of autonomy, which, according to the results of a study by Winkler and colleagues (2018), plays a key role in the willingness of employees to share knowledge and acquire new knowledge (cf. Winkler et al., 2018, p. 202), is an opportunity in itself.

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