

## A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR LEADERS TO COPE WITH THE PANDEMIC

### Un cambio de paradigma para que los líderes hagan frente a la pandemia

**Brigitta Bánhidi**

Széchenyi István University Győr, Hungary  
vezetofejlesztes@banhidibrigitta.hu

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#### Resumen

El brote de COVID en 2020 ha dado la vuelta a nuestro enfoque del trabajo, ya que permitió a millones de empleados experimentar los beneficios de trabajar desde la seguridad de sus hogares. Dos años más tarde, los modelos de trabajo híbrido se han proliferado y varias empresas tienden a combinar el trabajo presencial con el remoto y buscan aprovechar ambos. Está a punto de producirse un cambio de paradigma por el que las decisiones individuales se orientarán a anteponer las necesidades del ser humano a las del crecimiento empresarial. Inspirados por la necesidad de los gerentes y líderes de comprender las repercusiones sin precedentes de esta “nueva normalidad”, en este artículo nosotros (a) discutimos las repercusiones de la pandemia en el entorno laboral, (b) identificamos los motivos para tener equipos híbridos y (c) enumeramos las conclusiones de nuestra revisión de la literatura como herramientas que los líderes pueden usar para mantener el nivel de productividad requerido en sus equipos. Hemos comprobado que los gerentes podrían considerar cambiar su enfoque de la presencia de los empleados in situ a los resultados y de reinventar el lugar de trabajo junto con sus colegas para integrar las preferencias privadas. Los líderes parecen ser más eficaces en un entorno de trabajo híbrido si se mejoran sus habilidades de gestión de personas y operan en un nivel de inteligencia emocional más alto que antes.

#### ■ Palabras clave:

Liderazgo; Covid-19; Entorno de trabajo híbrido; Cambio de paradigma; EQ

#### ■ Keywords:

Leadership; Covid-19; Hybrid working environment; Paradigm shift; EQ

#### Abstract

The 2020 Covid-19 outbreak has turned our approach to work upside down as it allowed millions of employees to experience the benefits of working from the safety of their homes. Two years later hybrid working arrangements have become widespread and several companies tend to mix on-site and remote working and seek to take advantage of both. A paradigm shift is about to take place whereby individual decisions would be driven by putting the needs of the human before that of the

business growth. Inspired by the need of managers and leaders to understand unprecedented implications of such a 'new normal', in this paper we (a) discuss the pandemic's implications on the working environment, (b) identify the grounds for having hybrid teams and (c) list the findings of our literature review as tools leaders may use to maintain the required productivity level within their teams. We have found that managers might consider shifting their focus from on-site employee presence to deliveries and to re-invent workplace together with their colleagues to integrate private preferences. Leaders seem to be more effective in a hybrid working environment if their people management skills are enhanced, and they operate on a higher EQ level than before.

Introduction – 1. Changes in our world: 1.1. Reason for a paradigm shift; 1.2. Historical process of paradigm shifts – 2. Recent changes to our workplaces: 2.1. The grounds for the post-pandemic hybrid teams – 3. Leadership in a hybrid environment – 4. Conclusions – 5. References

## INTRODUCTION

The challenge of COVID-19 induced shifts in overall human preferences of using our time for life and work purposes requires researchers to explore the resulting changes on workplace arrangements. Hybrid working structures (a combination of an employee working part time in the company office and part time from their own homes) have become one of the most important developments of the past 2 years that have an unexplored impact on business KPIs, e.g., business performance, profitability, fluctuation, and engagement as well. This paper intends to explore some aspects of applying a hybrid working arrangement, such as a) the pandemic's implications on the working environment, b) the grounds for having hybrid teams and c) the tools leaders can utilize to maintain the required level of productivity.

As Hume claimed, once we get used to how the world is working, habit makes it easier for us to cope with problems. This is true as long as they can be solved within our existing paradigm. As Covid-19 has changed the way we think about allocating our time between work and life purposes, a paradigm shift is about to take place whereby individual decisions would be driven by putting the needs of the human before that of the business growth.

This paper intends to serve as a guideline in these times as the decreased level of face-to-face meetings with team members require leaders to develop stronger people management skills ('soft skills') and operate on a higher EQ level than they were used to in the previously existing in-office working setup.

### 1. CHANGES IN OUR WORLD

The sudden outbreak of a pandemic, the so called Covid-19, has been a systemic shock of the 21st century, just like the 1918-1920 Spanish flu or WWII were for the 20th century. A systemic shock shakes the previously existing economic and social status

quo, and it can induce long-lasting global changes to processes, practices, and attitudes towards basic human needs (Kniffin et al., 2021). Covid-19 is both a human and an economic tragedy that can have a catastrophic impact on humanity and it might induce a recession in the world, like that of the Spanish Flu or the Black Death.

As of today, reported deaths of Covid-19 have exceeded 6.5 million worldwide, families have been impoverished, businesses have gone under, children have missed out on education – just to name a few of the negative consequences. The turbulence of the whole world become extreme, we no longer know what facts are solid and it is almost impossible to replicate experiences.

There are already some lessons to be learnt though. First is, that our health systems were not prepared to deal with such a shock, and it had to rely almost exclusively on its most important resource: people (doctors, nurses, health workers). We have also changed the ways we work, home office and hybrid working arrangements become a general setup that questions the need for long daily commutes and business offices, thus raises the need for changes to our physical environment. Overall, science's stakes are high with Covid as no historical evidence exists and changes happen overnight. We can observe the humanity perform the three perspectives that Hume (1999) described about everyday personal interactions: 1) people want to feel free and do what they want (i.e., travel freely and decide about vaccinations by themselves); 2) governments expect people to behave in a certain way (i.e., get vaccinated or stay home when requested); and 3) we want to believe people are calculable (i.e., trust in they will do what they said would do).

The world, as we knew it before the Covid-19 pandemic has been driven by the constant need of growth, has been pivoted on economic aspects. In search of business profit and higher standards of life, our humanity has created a significant health risk by conquering more and more territory in the nature, from the wildlife, which has led to certain animal-related diseases to come closer to humans. Lyme, MERS, Ebola and now Covid-19 are examples of those. One Health initiative<sup>1</sup> is an approach that acknowledges that human health is inextricably linked to the health of animals and our common environment. Changes in the environment and ecosystems might create new chances for illnesses to spread to animals that have to be tackled consciously and in advance. An essential component of human resilience must be to fix the social safety nets that have been torn asunder.

In the short run, firms have typically participated in empathetic reactions to Covid-19, and many have significantly transformed how and where their employees work (Howe et al., 2021). Economically, the globe has never been more intertwined, and it has never been subjected to such widespread disruption. While many people have felt and acknowledged the pandemic's short-term repercussions, the resultant paradigm alterations will almost certainly have long-term consequences with unknown breadth and influence. One thing is for sure though: the genie is out of the bottle, and we cannot simply go back to doing what we did before, there is a 'new normal' to come.

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<sup>1</sup> Run by the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth>

### 1.1. Reasons for a paradigm shift

Thomas Kuhn, an American philosopher proposed a historical approach to science in his 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. He introduced the term “paradigm” as referring to his views about how science behaves and changes over time. In his context, a paradigm is a ruling theory in a discipline, a window, through which we see the world. Being a set of values that guide our thinking and behaviour, one person can only have one, a guiding paradigm at a time. Referring to Kuhn (2021), there is a natural lifecycle of a paradigm: under-developed disciplines are in a pre-paradigmatic state, then a paradigm forms, and we arrive to a ‘normal science’ stage where unsolved problems are seen as puzzles and solved within the ruling paradigm until a crisis arrives and revolutions come in search for a new power.

Going back in history, we can take mathematics and physics for an example on such a process. These started to evolve and grow onto a stage when it could not fit into any one person’s head anymore, so they had to fall apart to pieces and form separate disciplines. Their research communities related to a distinguished member, the ‘guru’ of the discipline and a new paradigm has started to define what was acceptable new knowledge and what was not appropriate to think.

In today’s world we refer to paradigms as models or patterns for something that may be copied or as a group of ideas about how something should be done or thought about. The very basics of the ruling paradigm are contained in textbooks and transferred to education and practice. By this way, it all builds into the society of a given era as part of the conventional wisdom and help humans to find a subjective meaning of life.

Several paradigms live side by side to describe the several factors of our lives. These are, just to mention a few: we can make use of nature, competition makes businesses (and people) better, governments work for the greater good, globalization is keeping prices lower, information can be accessed without limits, social connections can be made online, etc.

They are useful for the humanity to ease our thinking and help us decide what is acceptable to do but not necessarily mean the one-and-only solution to all questions.

### 1.2. HISTORICAL PROCESS OF PARADIGM SHIFTS

Like the widely known theories on children's development as a series of discrete stages marked by periods of transition, Kuhn (2021) described two kinds of scientific change: incremental developments in normal ‘science’ and scientific revolutions between those relatively stable periods. The author suggested that a scientific revolution involve a ‘paradigm shift’, an important change that happens when the usual way of doing or thinking about or something is replaced by a new and different way. It usually comes when a certain problem area is widely conceptualized and there is general agreement on how the problems are to be solved – there is not much left to

solve. At this stage, if a crisis happens, the world changes a bit, and a new paradigm starts to emerge on the outline. A synthesis is produced soon that is sufficiently attractive to many people in the community.

A great historical example of a paradigm shift is from the 16th century. A Polish astronomer, Copernicus changed the geocentric understanding of the universe, centred around Earth, to a heliocentric understanding, centred around the Sun. The 19th century brought another significant paradigm shift with Darwin, who proposed the idea that species change over time (referred to as 'evolution'), give rise to new species, and share a common ancestor. Mendels (2007) recalls the French Revolution as another paradigm shift that converted religious energy into social energy.

To understand the paradigm shifts in the global economies, we must go back to Columbus who was the first to open up trade between the old world and the new world in 1492, hence countries got globalised. This was followed by the industrial revolution and the 20th century formation of multinational companies who went for global markets and cheap labour – businesses got globalised. The 21st century brought us the third era of globalisation, that of the people, when the chance is given to the individuals to collaborate and compete globally mainly due to information technology.

As for turning to today's guiding paradigm, an observation is made by Friedmann (2005) in his book *'The World is flat'*, where he says that the rise of new technology has made the world a global electronic village. Informatics helped in standardizing processes, improving availability of knowledge to all at a fast pace thereby our world has become unified.

Clarke and Clegg (2000) identified several signs of paradigm shifts in the management world: offices are exchanged for virtual space, authority is overpowered by influence, managers are complemented with leaders, loyalty to company is exchanged by loyalty to self and finally, job security became less important than personal freedom and control over life choices by the turn of the 21st century.

## **2. RECENT CHANGES TO OUR WORKPLACES**

The very first governmental reactions to the global outbreak of the Covid-19 virus were immediate lockdowns and transitions to remote workplaces in all scopes of activities that did not require presence (Chamakiotis et al., 2021). According to a quantitative research study by Béland et al. (2020) conducted on the US Current Population Survey's Labor Statistics with 60000 households included, the following chapters must be considered when measuring the impact of Covid-19 on the workforce. The physical destruction (e.g., sick leaves due to infections and death) of human capital decreases labor supply; the increased level of uncertainty and fear changes the general consumer behavior and in the long run, there may also be changes in the investment behavior by business owners. The authors highlight that some occupations are affected heavier than others. Essential workers, such as health care,

public transportation, law enforcement, first responders, food and agriculture workers, communications and ICT, critical manufacturing, finances, face the highest level of demand by the public and they have few choices but to continue showing up for work. On the next level, there are the ones who interact with the public and require contact with others, such as hospitality, which may increase the likelihood of infection, are experiencing a lower level of engagement and work ethics. The non-essential functions and occupations are mainly those that have previously used ICT tools to support home office initiatives; therefore, their workforce may easily be mandated to work from home as virtual teams in Covid-19 times.

When talking about the emphasis being on reaching business targets, we often end up chasing short term goals. Even company leaders are in big trouble trying to balance between investments for long term innovations and quick wins for short-term shareholder satisfaction. Covid-19 has put companies to a test in that sense too: only those could survive the past 2 years with ease that had already acknowledged the changing need of their employees and customers (e.g., digital transformation, sustainability aspects and increasing authority of the self). The immediate threat of death by the outbreak of the pandemic had faced many employees with the question about the meaning of their lives and a significant ratio came out by changing their preferences about how they want to conduct their days, allocate their time regarding work and life aspects. As the several waves of the pandemic have passed, many could have returned to their offices, but we see a reverse trend: voluntary unemployment is at a historical height and employees are leaving companies that require in-office presence which means individual freedom and control over one's life choices has become more important recently.

As organizations become more reliant on information technology, the number of disciplines in which knowledge workers (teachers, attorneys, architects, doctors, nurses, engineers, and scientists) are required to work has exploded. Peter Drucker created the knowledge worker term back in 1959, and it was subsequently refined in 1999 to describe someone who works primarily with information or develops and applies knowledge in the workplace. The author claimed that *'the most valuable asset of a 21st-century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity. [...] And knowledge workers are not subordinates; they are 'associates.'* For, once beyond the apprentice stage, knowledge workers must know more about their job than their boss does—or else they are no good at all<sup>2</sup>. A similar observation is made by Frick (2010) when he states that knowledge workers are individuals valued for their ability to gather, analyse, interpret, and synthesize information within specific subject areas to advance the overall understanding of those areas and allow organizations to make better decisions. This calls for providing an increasing level of authority and involvement in one's job.

Collins also studied high-performing organizations to determine whether there were any trends in the cultures of the employees. He made two controversial statements: *'...expending energy trying to motivate people is largely a waste of time<sup>3</sup>*, and *'You*

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<sup>2</sup> Drucker, 2001, p.78.

<sup>3</sup> Collins, 2001, p. 74.

*cannot manufacture passion or 'motivate' people to feel passionate. You can only discover what ignites your passion and the passion of those around you<sup>4</sup>.*

It is this human passion that may help us overcome our current systemic shock, the Covid-19 pandemic as well. According to Hume (1999), passion will tell us where to go and reason will tell us how to get there. If it is in our everyday habit to recognize things we don't know, we will be able to learn even from our mistakes. The new paradigm after Covid-19 therefore (and in result of all the above aspects) would be to put the human being, the worker into the centre of our world instead of the business that has been there for the past centuries.

Song (2004) used a metaphor with body parts to describe different eras of science. After the 'hands-on' for inquiry movement during 1960s-70s and the 'minds-on' for constructivism during 1980s-90s, the 21st century brought us the 'hearts-on' science that can also be applied for the shifted focus of our guiding principles. When following our hearts, problems like risking our family's health to pursue business goals or working as many hours as possible to get to burnout will be easily solved in the favour of the human which change in preferences may lead to a quicker end of a pandemic situation too.

## **2.1. The grounds for the post-pandemic hybrid teams**

The first signs of virtual teams date back to the 1990's when technological innovation accelerated, and mobile phones became a commodity as well as a tool for business communication. The ever-increasing development of telecommunication has played a significant role in globalization as human resources, in particular talent has become available throughout the globe, without location constraints. The widespread use of virtual teams came only though when the technological development provided ground for high-speed, real-time oral and digital, written communication. The benefits of virtual teams are inevitable: they provide access to talent irrespective of its residence, they reduce travel and commuting costs and give opportunity for a more flexible work-life time-distribution. Chamakiotis et al. (2021) also describe characteristics that tell apart Covid-19 induced virtual teams in comparison to the previously existing ones. A very important difference is that the pandemic induced teams had to involve employees that previously did not want to work from home or were not considered as capable of doing so. Covid-19 induced virtual teams were primarily local with little diversity of culture, time-zone, and location. Team members knew each other and the organization well in most of the cases, so leaders had tasks mainly in adapting to the technology-mediated processes: online meetings, performance management and employee-wellbeing responsibilities. The level of technological maturity within companies also differed, and many employees had to use their own devices when they were suddenly sent to lockdown. As months passed by and the pandemic seemed to be lasting for a longer period, companies started to invest in technology, and a large-scale digital transformation has taken place in the past two years. Most researchers

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<sup>4</sup> Collins, 2001, p. 109.

consider that Covid-19 has played a disruptor and a catalyst role in the virtualization processes: companies had no choice but to switch to remote working arrangements if they wanted to continue business when governments brought regulations about social distancing for health and safety reasons<sup>5</sup>.

The level of virtuality a team has –based on their geographical distribution– will be a factor to be considered when observing different leadership scenarios (e.g., globally dispersed teams on the one hand, and in-office team members working from home temporarily, on the other hand) (Kniffin et al., 2021). A team’s level of virtuality can vary widely based on the ratio of face-to-face and virtual contacts that is significantly determined by the above factors. Mitchell and Brewer (2021) define hybrid teams as the ones who have face-to-face contact in addition to their technology-supported collaboration. The hybrid dispersion factors that are described by the authors are location, organization, time zone and culture. The difficulty of a hybrid team is to live up to the one-team idea and create unity regardless of their different physical or time-zone locations.

To date, the following hybrid working models have been used: at-will employment, split weeks, shift work and flexible work week (Beno, 2020). According to a Gartner (2021) poll, 99% of HR leaders expect employees to work in a hybrid arrangement soon as it allows both organizations and employees to benefit from both worlds.

### 3. LEADERSHIP IN A HYBRID ENVIRONMENT

The special implications for leaders of virtual teams in the post-Covid-19 era are still not clear as we are currently undergoing the change. However, some directions are already visible. As in peaceful times, pandemic leadership also requires a balanced mix of optimism and realism regarding the future. Kniffin et al. (2021) suggest that leaders and managers should make the right decisions and provide reassurance to their teams when projecting visions. It is inevitable for the members to be committed to a common purpose (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021). This can be done by *shifting to results-focused assessment* as opposed to presence-requirements.

It is difficult to find balance between local priorities and company needs on a larger scale and to create a corporate identity in teams that are globally dispersed (Chamakiotis et al., 2021). Mitchell and Brewer (2021) argue that the manager of a hybrid team must actively *work on reshaping the workplace* in ways that fully leverage both (in-office and remote) worlds’ advantages. As the authors put it *‘The goal of managers in this new environment is to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of place and time and leverage them in a way that can lead teams towards their goals’*<sup>6</sup>. The importance of realizing the different characteristics of each working arrangement puts the hybrid team’s manager into a determining role. On the other hand, Mitchell and Brewer (2021) also found that hybrid arrangements achieve more successful team buy-in when leaders *offer partnership to their teams* in identifying

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<sup>5</sup> Béland et al., 2020; Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Kniffin et al., 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell and Brewer, 2021, p. 2.



the tasks that require face-to-face work (collaboration tasks) versus the ones that can preferably be done remotely (focused work).

Hybrid teams can easily lack team trust as non-presence relationships often result in communication gaps. As Mitchell and Brewer (2021) convey, team development is an underlying challenge: how a manager can build trust between team members, how can the team set up an effectively working communication platform, how team knowledge can be shared and how they manage conflict within the organization. The lack of cohesion between team members requires leaders of virtual teams to *be bridges that develop trust throughout the team* and promote motivation and commitment. Beno (2021) also argues that the ideal workplace culture focuses on activities that generate and demonstrate trust. In their research about Austrian companies that work either with an in-office setup or in a hybrid working model they found that hybrid workers are more often supporting, caring, rewarding, forgiving, and inspiring than cubicle workers, while there is no significant difference in treating each other with respect, demonstrating integrity, fostering dignity and showing appreciation for one another. Though there was an overall experience about different working cultures leading to different levels of e-working, Beno concludes that *'hybrid is characterised by flexibility and choices'*<sup>7</sup>. As Covid-19 opened the gate for individual preferences, employees no longer want to be told what and when to do, but rather pick their own preferred way of completing the job and are pushing for new work arrangements.

A common fear for working in a hybrid setup is the development of subgroups, i.e., the division of the whole group into smaller groups based on demographic attributes or workplace preferences. Mitchell and Brewer (2021) argue that the leader is called to do all and even more in *recognizing and rewarding achievements* irrespective of the level of in-office presence a team member shows. Chamakiotis et al. (2021) suggest in their article that virtual teams can reach higher performance with additional, *informal intra-team leaders* that help the official leader to listen to the team members while providing on-the-job support.

The most widely recognized challenges of teamwork in any setup are related to communication. Some of these are waiting to speak, one member's speaking domination, misunderstandings due to language constraints, poorly defined goals, and insufficient planning. Infocommunication tools cannot be substitutes for face-to-face encounters between a leader and his colleagues because the extensive use of ICT has negative effects on the organizational culture. It limits the opportunity for personal rapport and provides ground for misunderstanding resulting in conflicts. Basic human resources management functions, e.g., performance appraisals, feedback, and counselling sessions, are *better held when both parties are present at the same location*. In their recent study about the impacts of Covid-19 to workplaces, Kniffin et al. (2021) argue that asynchronous e-communication, such as e-mails, chats, and project management tools, lack richness of emotions and understanding; thus, it easily results in conflicts escalating. Another study states that employees who are mostly led by social apps, e.g., chat and task management software, may become indifferent and

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<sup>7</sup> Beno, 2021, p. 333.

show lower productivity levels in the long run<sup>8</sup>. It was also observed by the authors that the managers tend to pass on tasks in quickly written text messages as a side-activity, while being engaged in some other work at hand. This practice bears several risks: difficulties to interpret the leader's original intent and misunderstanding of circumstances, tasks, and responsibilities on the receiving end, deteriorating social connections between the parties and burnout of the sender due to the extensive use of one's own resources.

Mitchell and Brewer (2021) also warn us about the different feelings that can arise with the employees on hybrid: once it reduces stress due to increased productivity while on the other hand increases stress due to lack of separation between work and home. It is wise to know that people have individual constraints, and it is the leader's responsibility to *stay alert to signs of burnout* and optimize team member's own productivity with health and wellness. Some companies operate with meeting-free-days once a week or once a month, for example. The fun factor is also critical for the overall health of a team and is indeed influential in the development of team trust.

It is the management's sole responsibility to create an environment with a balanced mix of working effectively for achieving business targets and maintaining interpersonal connections within the team (Kulshreshtha & Sharma, 2021). The latter has an essential role in team cohesion and team unity, creating a sense of belonging, raising individual happiness. A high level of collaboration allows for increased resources, better creativity and innovation, improved decision quality and in turn, increased return on investment (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021). If *synchronous collaboration time is organized* in a hybrid setup, it can be the heartbeat of a team as it provides a prioritized block of time with high responsiveness. Such occasions emulate the spontaneous brainstorming and rapid problem-solving practices of the old-school in-office work.

Several research deals with the importance of *running hybrid meetings effectively*. Based on the findings of Mitchell and Brewer we can say that the sole purpose of meetings is to gain the wisdom of the crowd therefore they need to be intentionally planned and invitations need to go out to required participants with a clear agenda, goals, and preview material in advance. It is every company's interest to establish meeting norms and determine the accepted and preferred platform for a given type of discussion. This includes adopting policies to start and end times, tracking assignments and deadlines and summarizing action items. As the authors claim, a typical profile of a hybrid meeting is as follows: social chat and introductions, discussion of the main topic, documentation of meeting minutes, assigning actions and owners to agreed tasks. The most important meeting messages and takeaways need to be repeatedly communicated using multiple technology capabilities (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021).

A straightforward conclusion of all the above is made by Beno (2021) when he claims that the managers of the past are not necessarily equipped to manage their teams in this modern workplace. Even though their research found that hybrid working helps

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<sup>8</sup> Brosi & Schuth, 2020 as cited in Kulshreshtha & Sharma, 2021.

to decrease toxic workplace cultures (because 25 of 29 tested workplace practices had more positive impact in hybrid than compared to cubicle-only work setups), they agree that the face-to-face interaction of executives is preferable to maintain social cues within the team.

To summarize our findings about useful leadership tools in the post-pandemic hybrid working arrangements, please refer to the table below:

**Table 1. Summary of changes to the workplace and emerging leadership tools**

Workplace characteristics		Pandemic-emphasized leadership tools used to maintain performance
Before Covid-19	Since pandemic	
In-office presence	Virtual and hybrid teams	Partnership in designing work Bridging stakeholders Cooperation and people management tasks in presence, rest in remote
Work within office hours	Work around the clock	Set communications channels and times Results focus, performance requirements Recognize achievements
Standard chain of command	Dispersed responsibilities	Informal intra-team leader Empower talents Alert to emotions

Source: author's own research and editing.

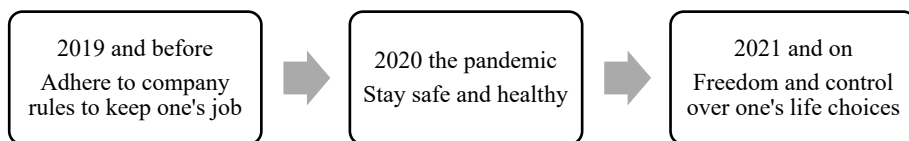
#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the implications of the Covid-19 induced hybrid working arrangements on the leadership tools and practices that can be used when driving a team towards desired business performance. To do this, we first analyzed the effects Covid-19 has made on the overall labor market and on general human preferences. After defining ruling paradigms, we turned onto discussing workplace consequences and finally listed several leadership areas that showed changes in approach since the outbreak of the 2020 pandemic.

During our literature review we have established that Covid-19 is a systemic shock that has affected billions of individuals all over the world. The health issues, fatalities, and the level of disturbance to our everyday lives have never been seen before. The pandemic has decreased the labor supply and increased uncertainty and fear in humanity which also shifted preferences about working. Business growth and high standards of living are the most important, yet selfish paradigms of our developed world and they have led to nature being over-used by humans. If we can understand the recent changes in human preferences towards work and life aspects, we can use this current pandemic to learn from our previous mistakes. As for the effects on paradigms, research suggests that we see a paradigm shift that will result in taking the

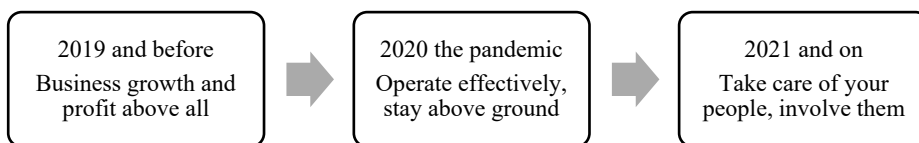
human being back to the centre of our thinking which may lead to a more balanced and healthier use of our world.

### Graph 1. Noted changes in ruling paradigms for individuals



Source: author's own research and editing

### Graph 2. Noted changes in ruling paradigms for companies



Source: author's own research and editing

As companies developed their communication and organizational practices rapidly within the year of the pandemic, even newer forms of work arrangements have risen: the different forms of hybrid, a mix of in-office and work-from-home days. This setup is recognized to serve both the transformed individual preferences of the workforce and the talent retention, control and profitability needs of an employer.

We have intended to explore the best practices a leader can follow if being responsible for a hybrid team but there is no one-size-fits-all recipe as of now, in the middle of the change process. As we already see, a manager should shift its focus from employee presence to results delivered and should work on reshaping the workplace in partnership with its colleagues to incorporate special needs. This will build trust within the team and helps form effective ways of communication that result in a sustainable and lifting workplace culture – should the leader commit time and monetary resources on building and maintaining it. When different communication platforms are used wisely, infocommunication tools are serving transactional and operational tasks while face-to-face meetings cover soft topics and bonding. All in all, leaders need to develop stronger people management skills and operate on a higher EQ level than they were used to in the previously existing in-office working setup.

There is still potential for further research in this area: we propose a more thorough literature review while primary research is also to be conducted with leaders from different sizes of companies who have become e-leaders due to the pandemic to examine how they have changed their ruling paradigms.

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