



RE-LEARNING LEADERSHIP

Creating the hybrid-workplace leader

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pandemic has cast the spotlight on employee experience. As organizations chart their path towards hybrid working models, we wanted to explore how employees view their organization's handling of the pandemic and the kinds of leadership skills and attributes that should characterize organizations of the future.

We found a distinct perception gap between leaders and employees regarding how their organization managed the crisis. Overall, while 69% of leaders believe that their organizations managed the transition to a remote/hybrid working model successfully, less than half (49%) of employees agree. Such gaps in perception extend to numerous areas, such as the management of employee well-being, the extent of autonomy offered to employees, the level of productivity achieved, and the opportunities for learning and development that were provided to employees. Our research draws attention to the need for organizations to do more to address employee expectations and deliver an improved employee experience. For instance, only 34% of employees say that their organizations are actively working on initiatives to reduce employee burnout, and only 37% say that their organizations are actively empowering teams to make their own decisions.

Addressing these gaps and successfully transitioning to a hybrid working model will require a renewed emphasis on leadership attributes such as authenticity, emotional intelligence (EI), openness to change, and the ability to create cultures of trust where employees feel empowered. However, our research shows that leaders are perceived to be lacking capabilities in these areas and organizations are not doing enough to scale training programs aimed at building these capabilities. For instance, only 27% of organizations are actively scaling EI-related leadership-development programs, and only 34% are scaling programs to train leaders in the skills needed to build cultures of trust. It is important to highlight, however, that training programs are only one part of the solution. To prepare leaders to lead organizations in hybrid work environments, organizations will also need to complement

leadership training programs with processes and practices that value and reward the leadership attributes highlighted above. We found that few organizations are focusing on this. For instance, only 36% of HR executives say that their organizations have overhauled processes related to compensation and benefits to reward leaders who demonstrate these attributes.

Encouragingly, organizations that focus on equipping leaders with the right skillsets and, at the same time, are also creating the necessary enabling conditions to support leaders (a cohort that we call "Pioneers"), are better positioned to meet the needs of employees in a hybrid world. Employees belonging to these organizations enjoy a greater sense of well-being, feel more trusted and empowered, and experience a greater sense of inclusion, compared to employees from other organizations.

Against this backdrop, organizations must apply a systems thinking approach to implement change and build the cultural foundations for people-centric leadership. This will require building behaviors and attributes that will be critical for effectively leading the hybrid workplace while transforming processes, systems, and KPIs to support these behaviors. Organizations will also need to ensure that their C-suite executives actively embody the attributes of people-centric leadership and act as role models for leaders across the organizational hierarchy. Further, employee well-being should be front and center, with focus not only on curative measures, but more importantly, on preventive measures to avoid burnout. Finally, training programs should be upgraded to ensure that leaders and employees are equipped with the skillsets necessary for a hybrid world.

INTRO DUCTION

Since early 2020, organizations have faced unique and never-before-seen challenges. As they now grapple with shifting to hybrid working models, the trend of growing employee resignations, as seen in the US and UK, has further heightened organizations' concerns regarding the future of the workplace.¹ In the US, around four million people quit their jobs in April – a 20-year high – followed by a record ten million jobs being available by the end of June.² Many business leaders have launched investigations into the causes of this trend, but burnout, general dissatisfaction with their current role, and looking for more meaning in their work, have all been posited as reasons. This points to the need for organizations to do more to ensure that they meet employee expectations and thereby raise their retention rates.

To understand how employees view their organization's handling of the pandemic and their perspective on the current readiness of organizations to adapt to hybrid work, we conducted a global research study covering large organizations across 12 countries in key industries such as consumer products and retail, automotive, manufacturing, energy and utilities, financial services, public sector, and healthcare. The two-fold research included:

- A survey of 1,380 respondents from 548 organizations, comprising the following profiles:
 - 461 leaders from various functional groups in the organization, including strategy, recruitment, customer engagement, technology, inclusion, and diversity teams.
 - 460 middle-management executives from similar functional groups.
 - 459 employees in non-supervisory positions.
- In-depth interviews with industry executives, academics, and leadership-development experts (more details on the research methodology are available at the end of the report).

Broadly, this report explores four themes:

1. How do employees view their organization's management of the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Are organizations taking adequate action to build skills, attributes, and processes for a hybrid working model?
3. What are the impacts of scaling leadership training programs and radically transforming leadership frameworks and processes on the employee experience?
4. How can organizations develop and sustain policies, practices, and behaviors for a hybrid work environment?

Categories of executives

Throughout the report, we have categorized the surveyed executives into various groups:

Leaders:

Executives with designations Director or above (Director, Senior Director, Vice President, Senior Vice President, Executive Vice President or equivalent, and C-suite) who supervise/oversee certain groups or business units

Employees:

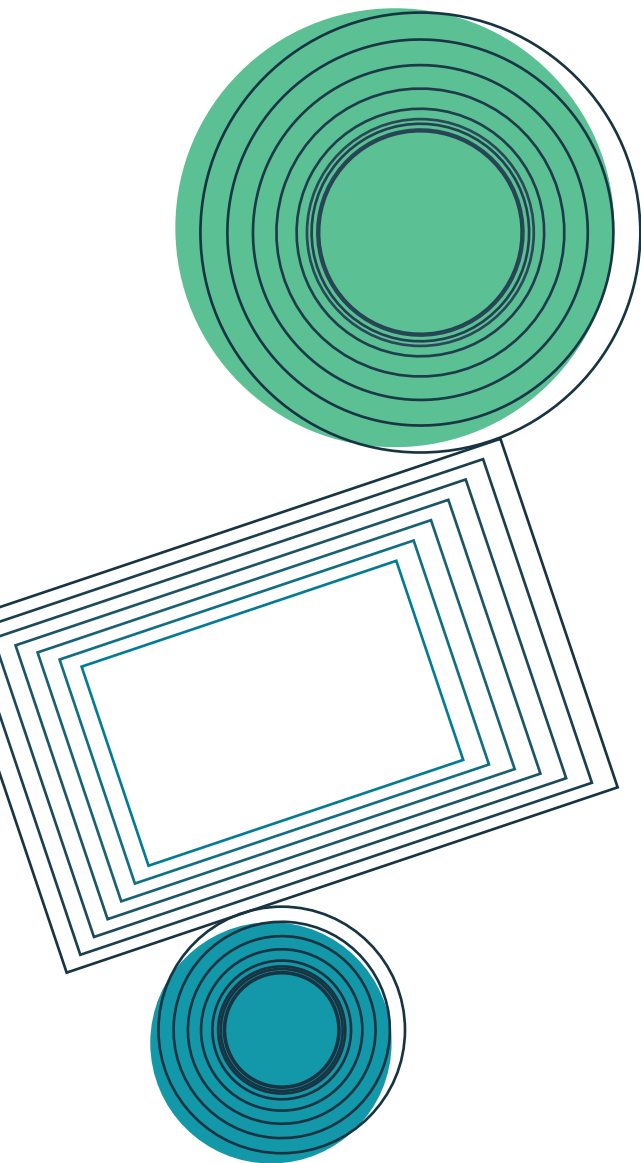
Non-supervisory positions

HR:

Executives responsible for talent acquisition, people advisory, performance management, and learning and development



1. MANY EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN SKEPTICAL OF THEIR ORGANIZATION'S MANAGEMENT OF THE PANDEMIC



At the beginning of the pandemic, organizations and leaders were thrown into the incredibly challenging position of managing a smooth but rapid transition to a predominantly remote working model while continuing to manage all aspects of work, delivery, and safety. Employee health and well-being became paramount and keeping workforces engaged and motivated was suddenly top of mind. In this context, we explored through our survey the extent to which employees believe that their organizations met the challenges at hand and repaid the trust that had been placed in their stewardship. We found that close to half (49%) of employees feel that their organizations managed the transition to remote/hybrid work well. While this reflects positively on the strength of management and leaders overall, especially given the extraordinary nature of the COVID-19 crisis, it also raises cause for concern. We found a distinct perception gap between leaders' assessment of how well their organizations had managed the crisis and employees' perspective.

The perception gap

Based on our previous research, perception gaps between leaders and employees on various issues concerning the organization are not new in themselves.³ However, the gaps that emerged in our current research reflect employees' concerns as they adapt to new working models in a pandemic environment. Overall, close to seven out of ten (69%) leaders believe that their organizations managed the transition to a remote/hybrid working model smoothly, however, fewer than one in two (49%) employees in non-supervisory roles agree. Specifically, pronounced gaps exist between the perspective of employees and leaders regarding the handling of various issues through the course of the crisis such as employee health and well-being, provision of autonomy, performance management, learning and development, organizational productivity, and innovation and creativity, among many others (see Figure 1).

Figure 01

Different perspectives on how the COVID crisis was handled by organizations

During the COVID-19 crisis, how well have organizations been adapting in the following areas?
 (% of respondents who agree with the following)



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=461 leaders, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles.

Employee well-being is front and center

As Figure 1 shows, employee perception diverges from that of leaders regarding how effectively employee health and well-being were managed through the course of the crisis. We also found that, while 62% of male respondents believe that leaders were able to ensure their health and mental well-being, only 46% of female respondents felt the same. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated issues that women typically face in terms of managing childcare responsibilities and many other domestic tasks alongside their work responsibilities. Research conducted in the UK shows that women in that country experienced negative outcomes related to increased housework and childcare much more commonly than men during the COVID-19 lockdown in April 2020, for instance.⁴

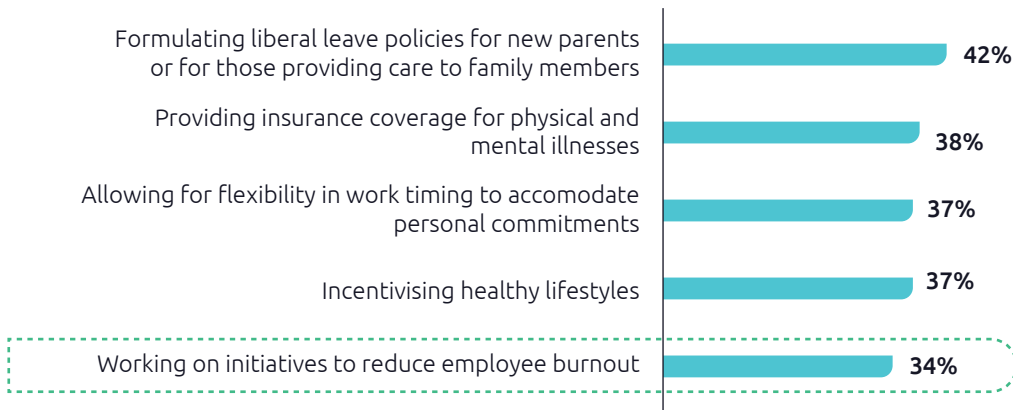
Many organizations are not reacting effectively to the issue of protecting employee well-being, especially when it comes to addressing the problem of employee burnout (see Figure 2). Our previous research (in 2020) shows that 55% of employees feel burned out due to longer working hours in a remote environment. This was even higher in the 31–40 age group.⁵ Despite this, in our current research we found that organizations have not established adequate practices to address this issue. For instance, only 34% of employees say that their organizations are actively working on initiatives to reduce employee burnout.

The issue of employee burnout has serious implications for the competitiveness and health of the organization as a whole. A 2018 study showed that burned-out employees are 2.6 times more likely to leave their employers.⁶ In the context of the Great Resignation Wave, it is even more important that leaders prioritize and act on this issue.

Figure 02

Organizations are not adequately ensuring employee well-being

% of employees in non-supervisory roles who say their organizations actively practice the following



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles.



People are still uncomfortable talking about emotions in the workplace – many still see it as unprofessional. If you ask people how they're feeling, most often they say 'okay' or 'good.' Resilient people are able to name how they're feeling and are able to acknowledge – 'Actually, today, I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed.' If people are not able to acknowledge feelings like this, that's how burnout happens. So, there's a lot of room for development in this regard.

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director and co-founder of Twyla, a firm that offers programs to help business leaders adopt a human-centric leadership style that is founded on values such as trust and compassion.

Examples of organizations that are taking positive steps towards safeguarding employee well-being include:

- In order to combat burnout, Nike gave its office employees a week off to “unwind” and “destress.” Other companies that have taken similar measures include LinkedIn and social-media management company Hootsuite.⁷
- Crowdfunding platform Kickstarter has taken the issue even further and plans to implement a standard four-day work week in 2022.⁸ Unilever is also testing a four-day work week for its employees in New Zealand.⁹
- To help employees cope with the pandemic, Zoom has focused on fostering a culture of trust and continuous communication that enables employees to voice issues such as burnout and seek the help they need. The company also organized “empathy training” sessions to help managers develop better listening skills, in order to be more responsive to the needs of employees.¹⁰
- Target, a US-based retailer, extended sick leave allowance for all its employees, and provided high-risk employees with 30 days’ worth of paid leave that they could use if they felt uncomfortable coming to work in pandemic conditions. In addition, the company also provided all its in-store employees with a USD2/hour pay increase from March through May 2020.¹¹

Research on organizational change suggests that factors such as reducing the demands of work and providing greater autonomy and social support have a significant impact on employee well-being. There is therefore a need for

organizations to go beyond curative measures (e.g., providing health and wellness benefits such as free counselling services, gym memberships, etc.), which is what organizations commonly do as part of employee well-being initiatives, and to look at employee well-being more holistically. Dr. Leslie Hammer, a psychologist and professor at the Oregon Institute of Occupational Health Sciences, stresses the need for building empathy skills among business leaders:

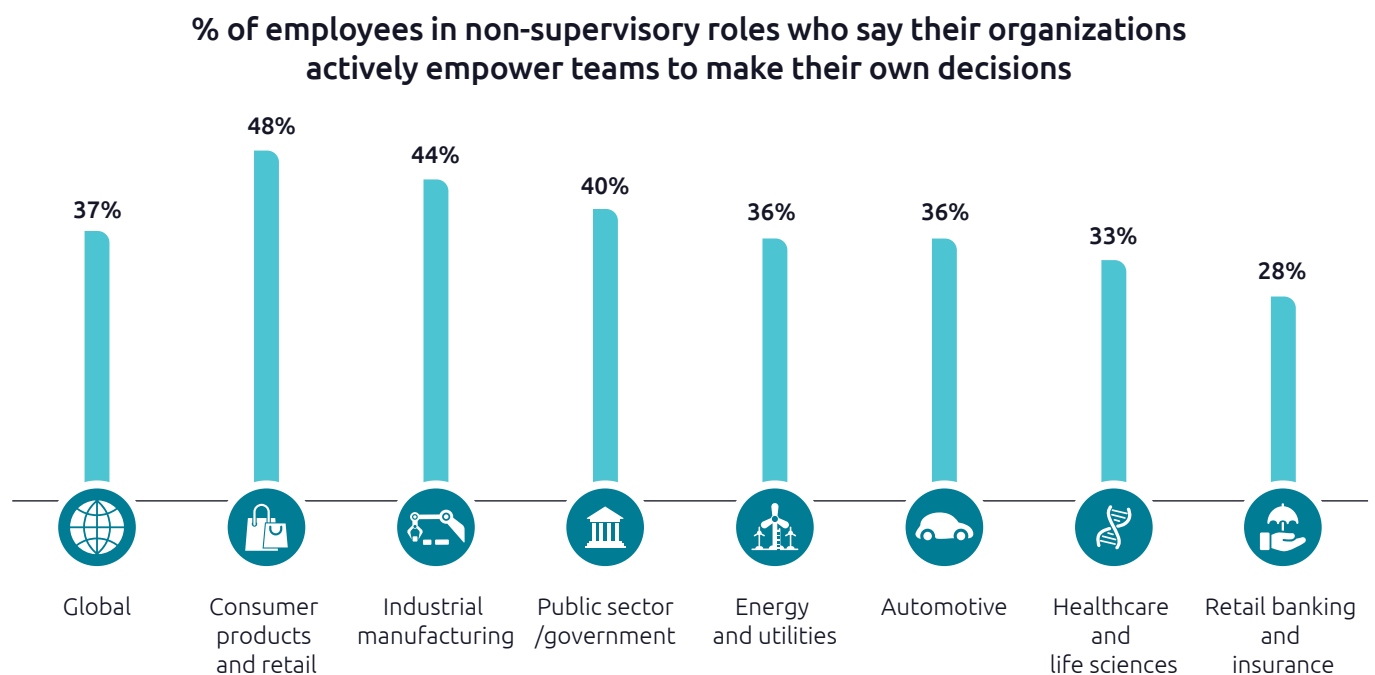
“I actually think training top leadership in supportive behaviors is absolutely where we need to be.”¹²

Establishing preventive measures that ensure employees are not overburdened will be critical to avoid employee burnout. Organizations will need to devise ways to anticipate burnout and provide necessary support to prevent it.

Employees seek greater empowerment in the workplace

While trust in the workplace has always been important, in the remote/hybrid workplace the need to trust employees by allowing them greater autonomy and accountability for the productivity of their roles became essential. However, only 37% of employees say that their organizations actively empower teams to make their own decisions (see Figure 3).

Figure 03 Less than 40% of employees globally say that organizations exhibit trust in the workforce



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles.

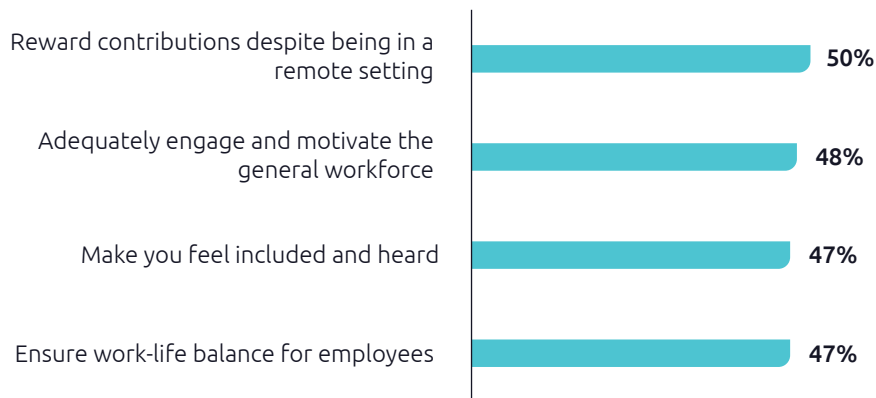
Organizations that promote employee empowerment also see a strong impact on their bottom lines. Unsurprisingly, organizations with highly motivated workers are 21% more profitable. In contrast, in the US, disengaged employees cost businesses a staggering USD450–550bn each year.¹³

Employees want leaders to instill a sense of belonging

When it came to employees' sense of belonging in the virtual workplace, fewer than one in two (47%) employees in non-supervisory capacities felt included and heard. In addition, only 50% felt that leaders were able to reward their contributions in a remote setting (see Figure 4).

Figure 04 Less than 50% of employees felt included and heard

“During the COVID-19 crisis, leaders and managers were able to....”
(% of employees in non-supervisory roles agreeing with the statements below)



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles.

47%

Share of employees who say their leaders and managers were able to make them feel included and heard during the COVID-19 crisis

People-centric, empathetic leadership will characterize the organizations of the future

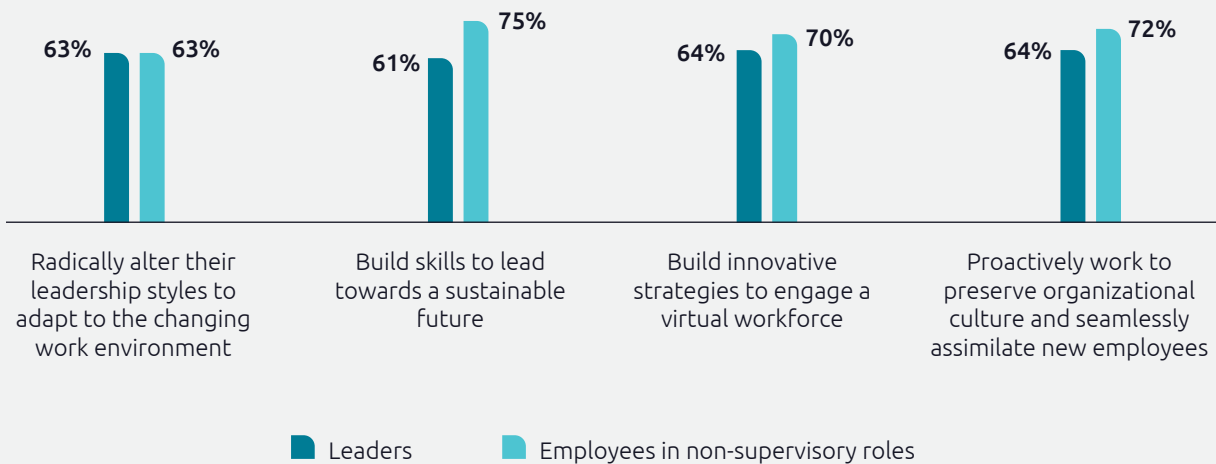
The concept of leadership has shifted in recent years from delegation and direction to empathy and collaboration. As a Chief digital commercial transformation officer from a global electric power distribution company shares, *“The ‘command and control’ style of leadership – where the leader says something, and people just don’t question it – that’s going to change. Whether or not employees have a direct conversation with their leaders, they expect*

them to be more aware of what their workforce thinks and wants. People are starting to question motives and actions a lot more.”

The hybrid work environment requires leaders to empathetically manage a workforce who are still struggling to maintain a balance between their work and home environment. As Figure 5 shows, with working models shifting, and more and more organizations moving to a hybrid working model, both leaders and employees agree that the former are required to reskill themselves, develop innovative strategies, and adapt their leadership styles to the changing work environment.

Figure 05 Leadership styles must adapt to the changing work environment

“With working models shifting and organizations moving to a remote-working model, leaders need to...”
 (% of respondents agreeing with the statements below)



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=461 leaders, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles.

Our research shows that the top three leadership styles that are perceived to be most relevant to future business practice are:

- Creating a vibrant organizational culture, sustainable business growth, and having a greater positive impact on society.
- Taking a calm and reasoned approach to team leadership and one-on-one interaction.
- Adapting leadership style and approach to suit the demands of a particular situation.

As David Ai, head of innovation at LSE Innovation in the UK says, *“Leadership today includes two new major elements. One is empathy – the emotional quotient, the ability to connect to the pain, and to express that feeling. The other is to start addressing the fundamental issues faced by employees and not just those of the senior leadership of organizations. Those are the two hallmarks of the new style of leadership.”*

2. ORGANIZATIONS ARE NOT DOING ENOUGH TO BUILD SKILLS, ATTRIBUTES, AND PROCESSES FOR A HYBRID WORKING MODEL

Organizations are not adequately developing the required traits and behaviors for the hybrid workplace

Leaders are perceived to lack key capabilities needed to lead organizations in hybrid environments

Leadership behaviors, attributes, and skills such as authenticity, emotional intelligence (EI), openness to change, and the ability to create cultures of trust where employees feel empowered, while highly significant in the pre-pandemic workplace, have assumed critical importance in the virtual/hybrid world. However, our research shows that these attributes are perceived to be lacking in leaders currently. For instance, 75% of employees view EI as a key attribute that leaders need to develop; however only 47% believe that leaders exhibit proficiency in it. Further, while 84% of employees believe that leaders need to develop the ability to build cultures of trust where employees are empowered to act with greater autonomy, only 50% believe that leaders have the skills and attributes needed to do so (see Figure 6). Emmanuel Tuchscherer, head of strategy, communication, and carbon-neutral solutions, ENGIE, a French multinational utility company, stresses the importance of trust-building in the context of virtual and hybrid work, *“The best leadership I ever met, in the public or private sector, have been people who trust their colleagues and teams and listen to them and take a lot of inputs from the environment, before making a decision. The ability to reflect and stay open to changing their minds and mindsets is another element of leadership required in the current context.”*

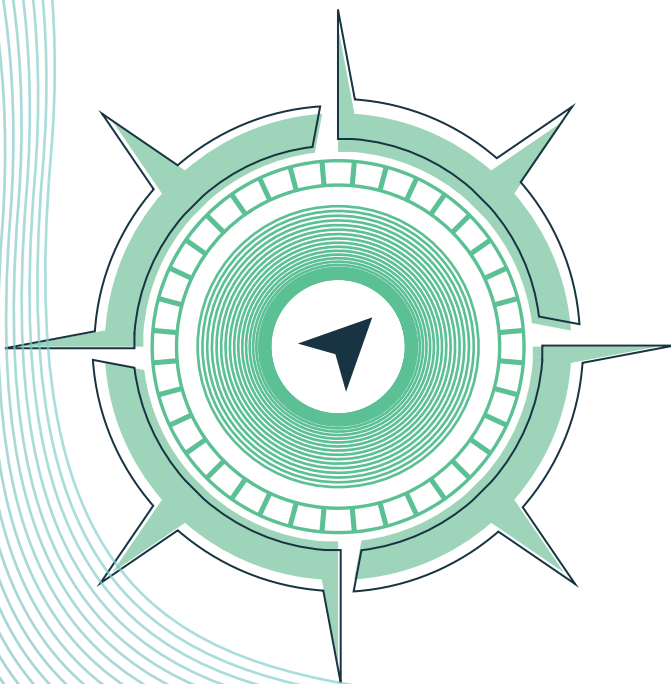
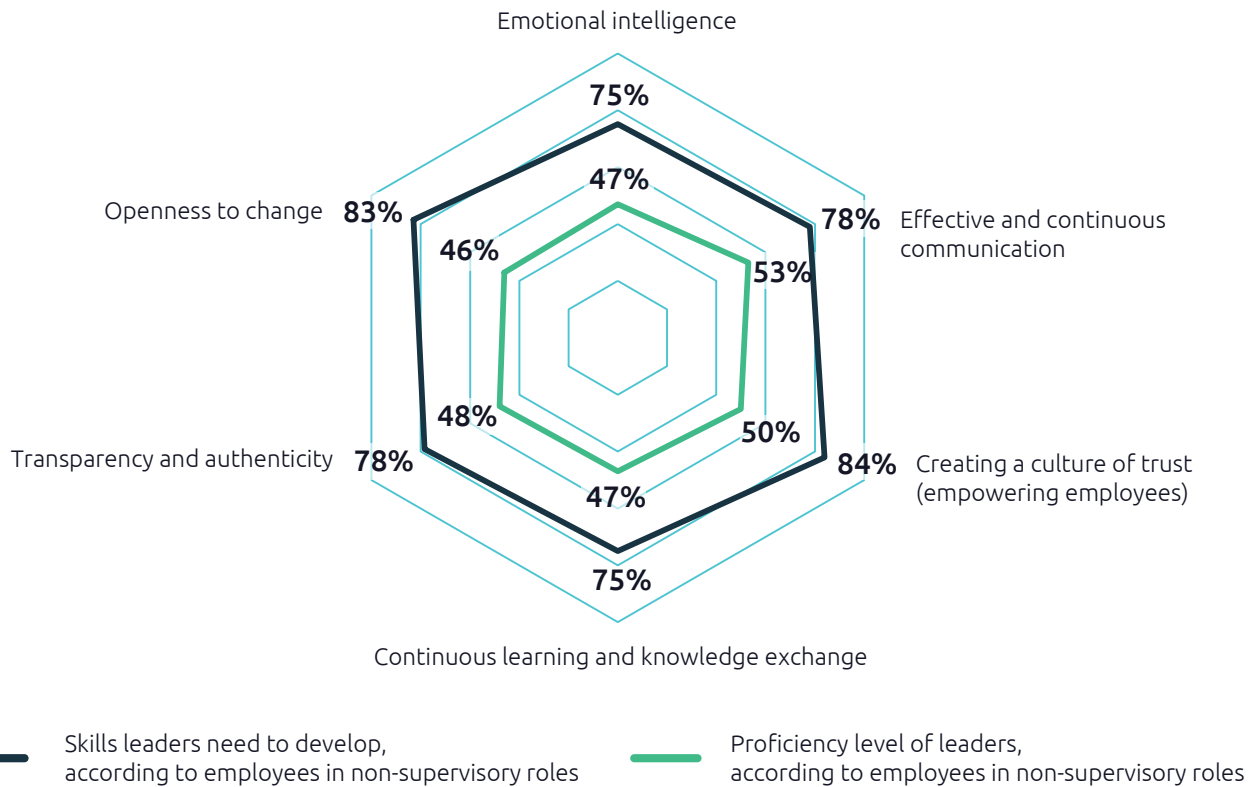


Figure 06

Leaders are perceived to be lacking the skills and attributes needed for a hybrid world

Employee perspective on current and required proficiency levels of leaders



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles.

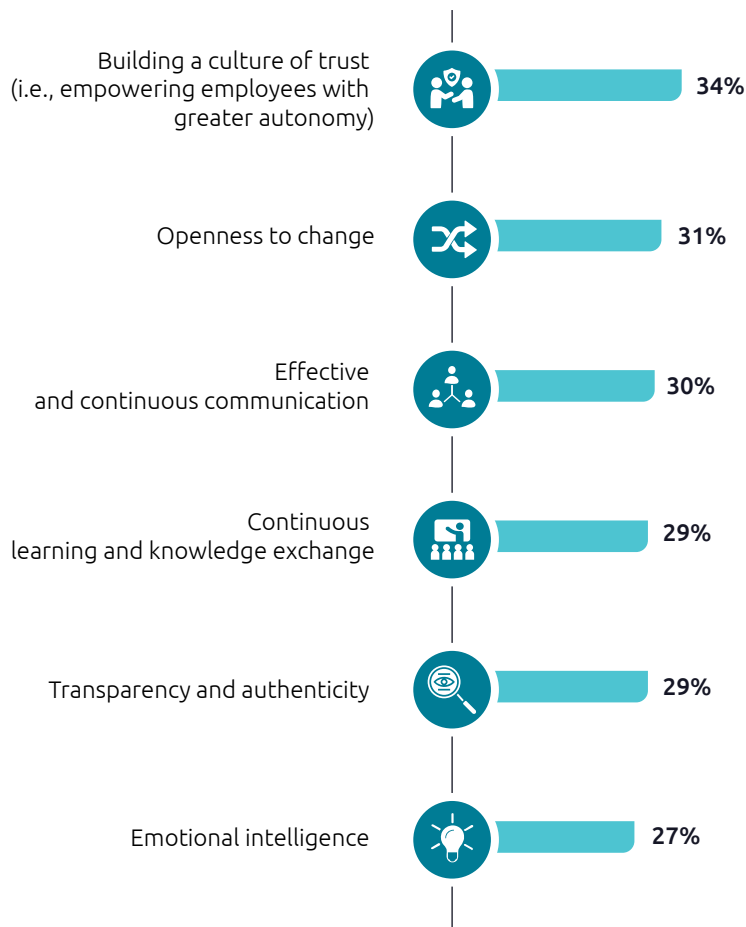
Organizations are not actively scaling training programs to navigate hybrid working models

Our research shows that organizations are not doing enough to equip leaders with the skillsets needed to successfully lead organizations in hybrid work environments. Only 27% of organizations, for instance, are actively scaling EI-related leadership-development programs, and only 34% are scaling programs to train leaders in the skills needed to build cultures of trust (see Figure 7).

Figure 07

Organizations are not scaling training programs that can better equip leaders to lead in hybrid work environments

Organizations that are actively scaling leadership development programs in the following areas throughout the organization
(% of respondents who say that their organizations are actively scaling these elements)



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=461 leaders including 91 HR leaders, N=159 HR mid-managers and employees in non-supervisory roles.

In addition to equipping leaders with skills to lead in hybrid environments, organizations will also need to equip employees with new skillsets. This is critical to ensure that the organization, as a whole, can adapt effectively to a hybrid work model, and that leaders and employees can act in tandem towards this goal. However, in research that we conducted in 2020 to understand organizations' priorities in the aftermath of the pandemic, less than half (48%) of organizations said they were investing in building employee skills in areas such as EI, adaptability, and collaboration.¹⁴

Organizations are not adapting their practices and processes to prepare for a hybrid workplace

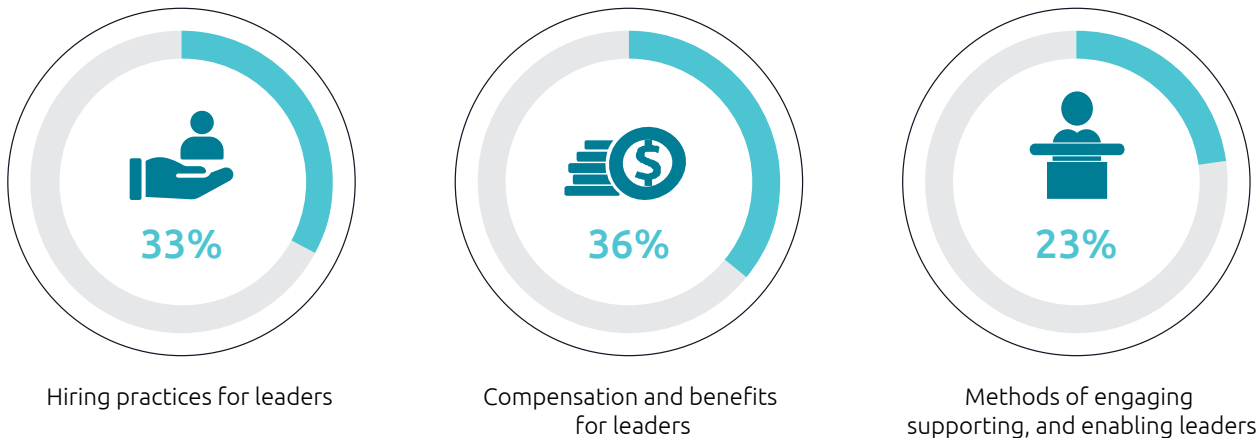
While training leaders in new skills is a key element of equipping them to lead in a hybrid environment, this is only part of what is needed. Organizations will also need to ensure that they establish the right enabling conditions for leaders to deliver effectively. These include redesigning processes and frameworks around hiring and performance evaluations of leaders, to ensure that skills and attributes necessary for hybrid work are adequately considered and rewarded.

Fundamental changes in such processes are necessary complements to training leaders.

However, our research shows that organizations are not focusing adequately on making these fundamental changes. For instance, only 33% of HR executives say that their organizations have overhauled hiring practices to attract leaders who have the attributes and behaviors required to lead organizations towards a hybrid future. And only 36% say they have adapted processes related to compensation and benefits, to reward leaders who demonstrate these attributes (see Figure 8).

Figure 08 Most organizations have not made significant changes to their processes and policies to attract and reward leaders who have the skills and attributes for the future

What are the core parts of your leadership framework that have been changed to adapt to the future?



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=250 HR executives.

Further, existing organizational processes and policies also need to be adapted to enable employees to deliver effectively in a hybrid work environment. However, our previous research on EI showed that only 36% of organizations evaluated candidates for emotional intelligence while hiring them. In addition, while 69% of employees in the same research said they were willing to learn and improve their EI skills if these were included as part of performance evaluation processes, only 26% of organizations said they

considered emotional intelligence skills while appraising employees.¹⁵

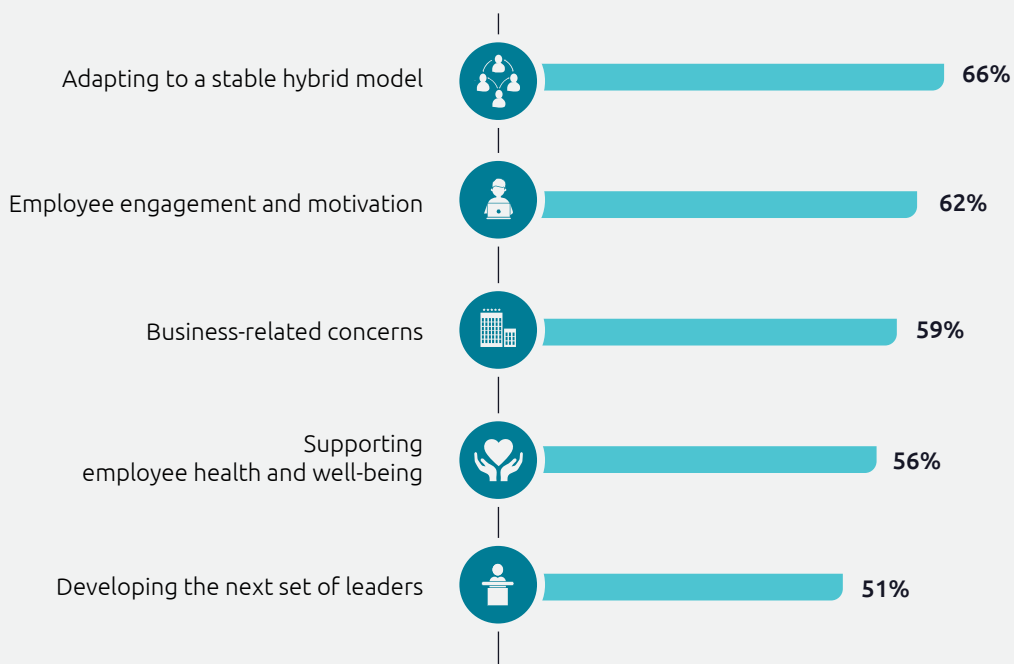
In the following section, we identify a group of organizations (which we call “Pioneers”) who are an advanced cohort, actively training their leaders on required skills and behaviors for a hybrid workplace, as well as creating the right enabling conditions to support them. We also look at the impacts of these measures on the employee experience.

EMPLOYEES AND LEADERS RECOGNIZE UNIQUE CHALLENGES IN WORKING IN THE HYBRID WORKPLACE

In our research, leaders highlighted a few key challenges in leading in the current workplace. Adapting to a stable hybrid working model emerged as one of the top challenges, along with managing employee engagement and motivation, as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 09 More than six in ten leaders see adapting to a stable hybrid workforce as a top challenge

Top-five leadership challenges, according to leaders



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=461 leaders.

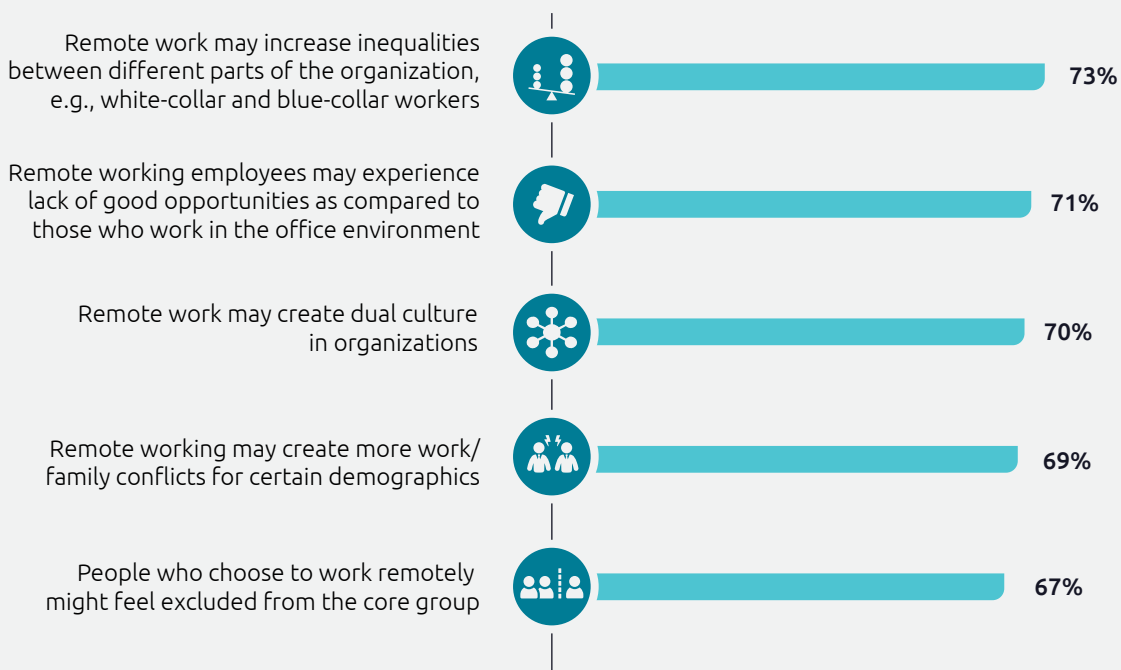
Functional and group leaders may be facing unique challenges; some functions may face a talent shortage, others may have to manage large-scale contractual working staff, others still may have to rapidly deliver to critical clients. Instead of a one-size-fits-all approach to these leadership challenges, organizations need to customize and adapt approaches, per requirements.

Additionally, there are other consequences to hybrid working, when some employees work from office and some remotely, that need to be dealt with by organizations and leaders:

- **73%** of employees believe that remote work may increase inequalities between white-collar and blue-collar workers
- **70%** of employees believe that remote work may create a dual work culture in organizations (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 More than seven in ten employees believe that remote working employees may experience a lack of opportunities compared to those who work in the office environment

% of employees in non-supervisory roles agreeing with the following statements



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles.

3. HOW LEADING ORGANIZATIONS MAKE THEIR EMPLOYEES FEEL MORE TRUSTED AND EMPOWERED IN A HYBRID ENVIRONMENT

As we saw in the previous section, most organizations have struggled to scale training programs effectively, and have not suitably adapted their leadership framework and processes to the new hybrid environment. However, we identified a small cohort of leading organizations who we call “Pioneers,” (also referred to as “leading organizations” in this section) that are actively deploying leadership development programs at scale, organization-wide, and are of radically overhauling their leadership framework and processes (see box – Who are the Pioneers?). Employees belonging to these organizations enjoy a superior employee experience that is unavailable to employees of other organizations. Our analysis shows that Pioneers’ employees experienced a smoother, more successful transition to a hybrid work environment; felt more empowered and included and have their voices heard in the workplace; and had more faith in their leaders’ skills.

WHO ARE THE PIONEERS?

We analyzed 548 organizations on the following two dimensions:

1. Their implementation of leadership-training programs
2. Their transformation of leadership frameworks and processes (hiring, compensation, trainings, etc.)

Based on these dimensions, we scored the organizations and classified them as follows:

- 3. Pioneers:** Top-five-percentile organizations who:
 - a. Are actively scaling leadership-training programs for behaviors, skills, and attributes such as emotional intelligence (EI), building cultures of trust, crisis management and resilience, transparency and authenticity, openness to change, effective and continuous communication, agility, and courage.
 - b. Have radically overhauled their leadership frameworks and processes (hiring, compensation, trainings, etc.) to adapt to the future.

The remaining organizations were divided into two cohorts, based on their scores and levels of maturity regarding the implementation of leadership-development programs, and their leadership processes and frameworks:

- 3. Followers:** Follow the Pioneers and constitute the next 30 percentile of organizations.
- 4. Laggards:** The remaining organizations, who are considered least mature according to the selected criteria.

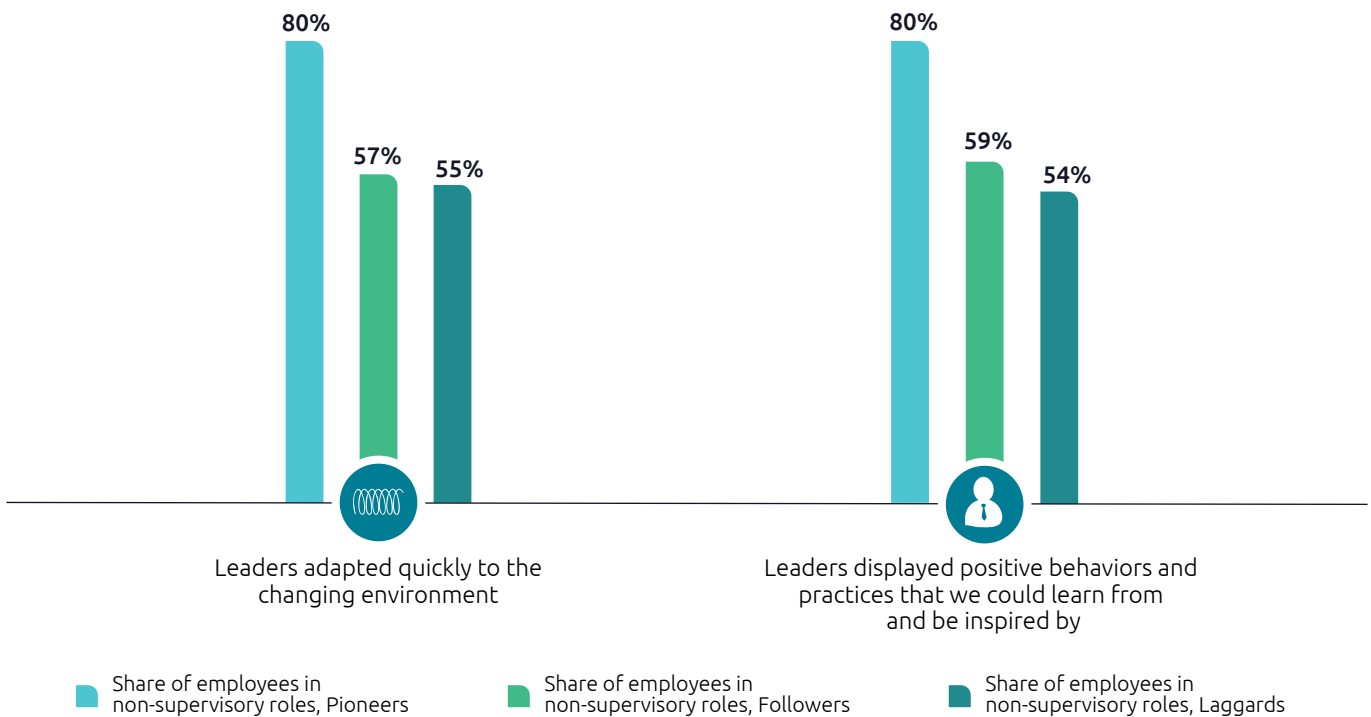
As we will see, Pioneers have been widely successful in providing a better employee experience (such as greater empowerment, opportunities for skill development, smoother transition to a hybrid work environment, etc.) compared to Followers and Laggards. This suggests that actively training leaders in required attributes and behaviors and, at the same time, building robust processes and systems to support the right leadership behaviors can offer significant advantages for organizations.

Leading organizations are better prepared for the hybrid work environment

In contrast to Followers and Laggards, employees of Pioneers attest that their leaders have adapted well to evolving circumstances (see Figure 11). In addition, 80% of employees of Pioneers say that their organizations have managed to maintain healthy productivity during the course of the pandemic, compared to 56% of Followers and Laggards on average.

Figure 11 Pioneers are better equipped to handle the hybrid work environment

To what extent did you trust your organization’s leaders to lead the organization successfully through the crisis?
 (% of employees in non-supervisory roles agreeing to the following)



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, with N=37 Pioneers, N=158 Followers, N=353 Laggards.

Moreover, 80% of employees of Pioneers agreed their organizations as a whole are equipped with the right behaviors and mindset to manage a hybrid workplace (i.e., manage both remote and physical workforces in the next 1–2 years). This compares to 50% of employees (on average) of Followers and Laggards.

Employees of Pioneers also have more faith in the capabilities of their leaders; 80% of them believe that their leaders have the required competencies and skills to lead the organizations of the future, compared to 57% of employees of Followers and 54% from Laggards.

80%

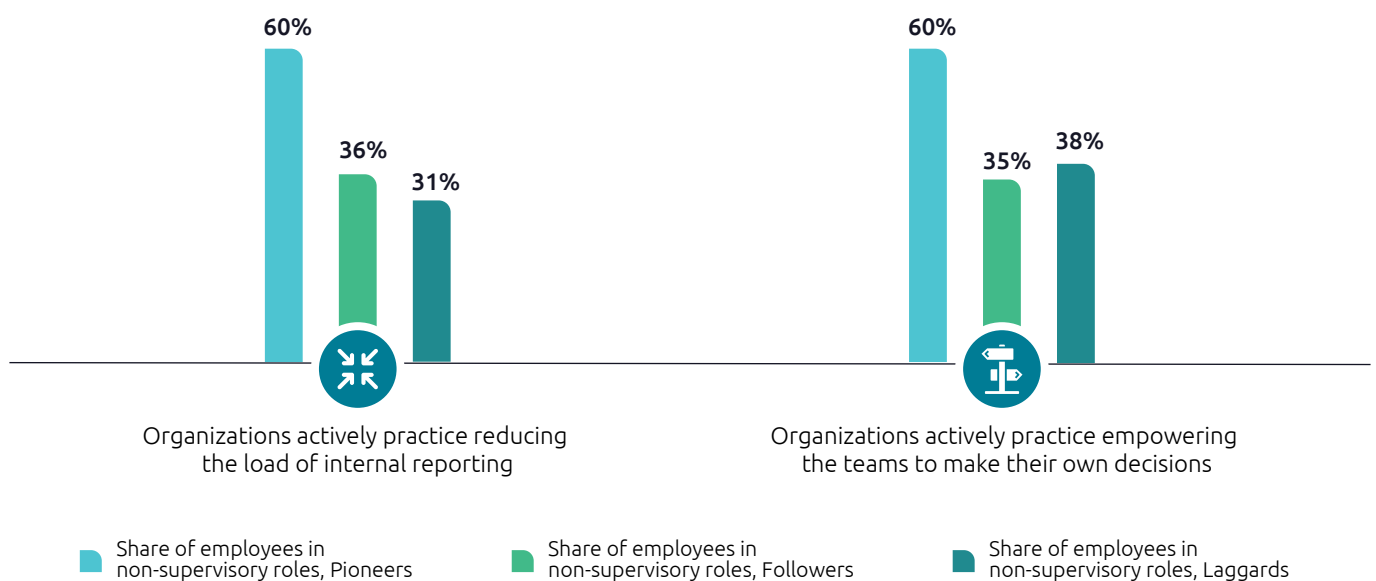
Share of employees of Pioneers who say that their leaders have adapted quickly to the changing work environment

Employees from leading organizations feel a greater sense of empowerment and appreciation

Eight in 10 employees of Pioneers (80%) agree that their organizations have empowered them to own their work and have provided them with greater autonomy through the course of the pandemic (compared to 52% of employees of Followers and Laggards on average). As we can see from Figure 12, employees of Pioneers rate their sense of trust and empowerment much more highly than employees from other organizations.

Figure 12 Employees of Pioneers feel they are empowered and trusted to a greater degree

% of employees in non-supervisory roles who believe that trust and empowerment are actively practiced in their organizations



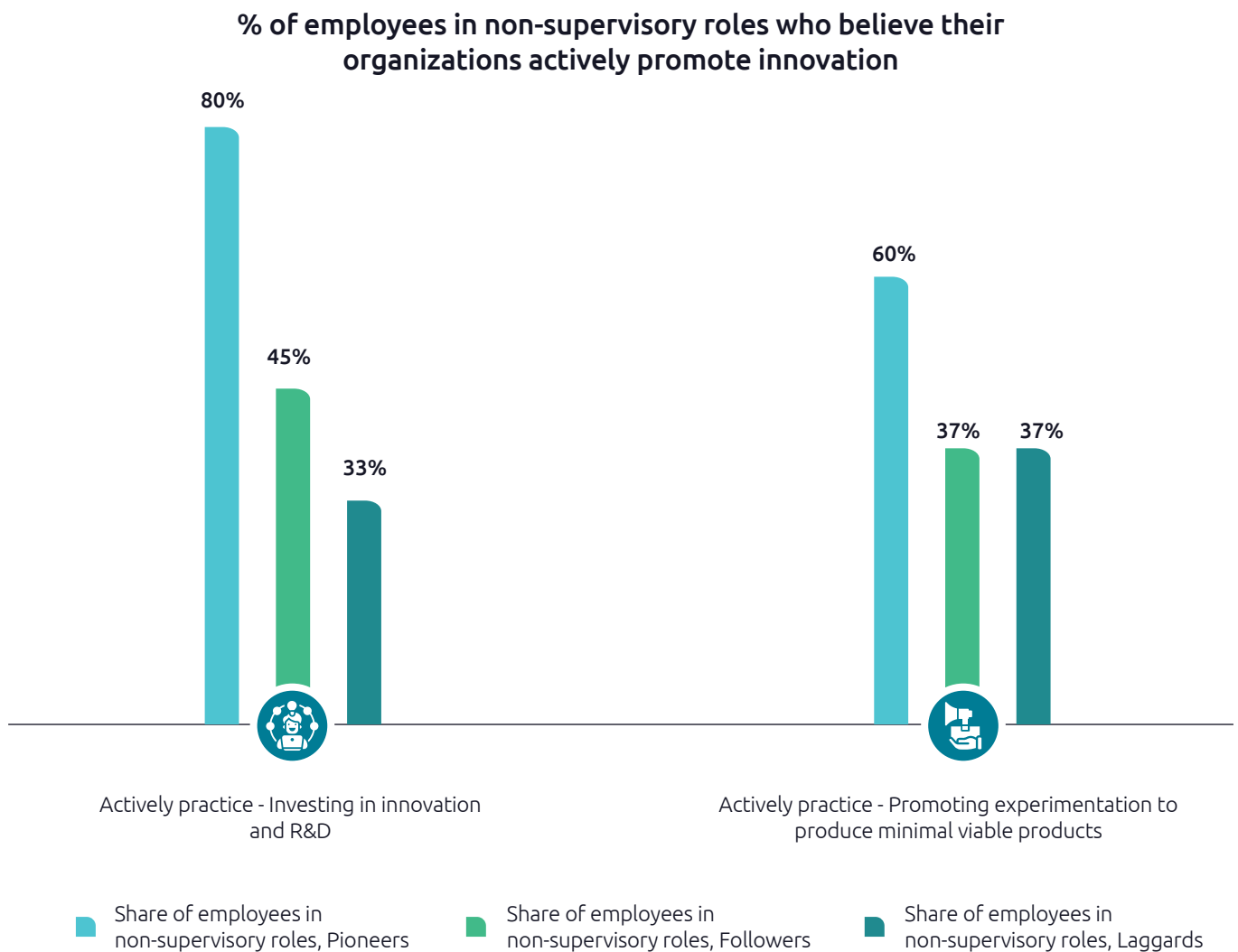
Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, with N=37 Pioneers, N=158 Followers, N=353 Laggards.

This again strongly indicates that there is merit in actively training leaders and building the right enabling conditions to support them, as employees from such organizations are better off than the rest.

Leading organizations invest in innovative employee development

Six in 10 (60%) employees of Pioneers believe that, during the pandemic, their organizations provided them with opportunities for continuous development. In contrast, only 46% of employees from Followers and Laggards felt the same (on average). Moreover, employees of Pioneers believe that their organizations actively invest in innovation and research and development (R&D), and promote experimentation, which, in turn, furthers their development of key capabilities for the future (see Figure 13).

Figure 13 Pioneers are actively investing in developing a culture of innovation



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, with N=37 Pioneers, N=158 Followers, N=353 Laggards.

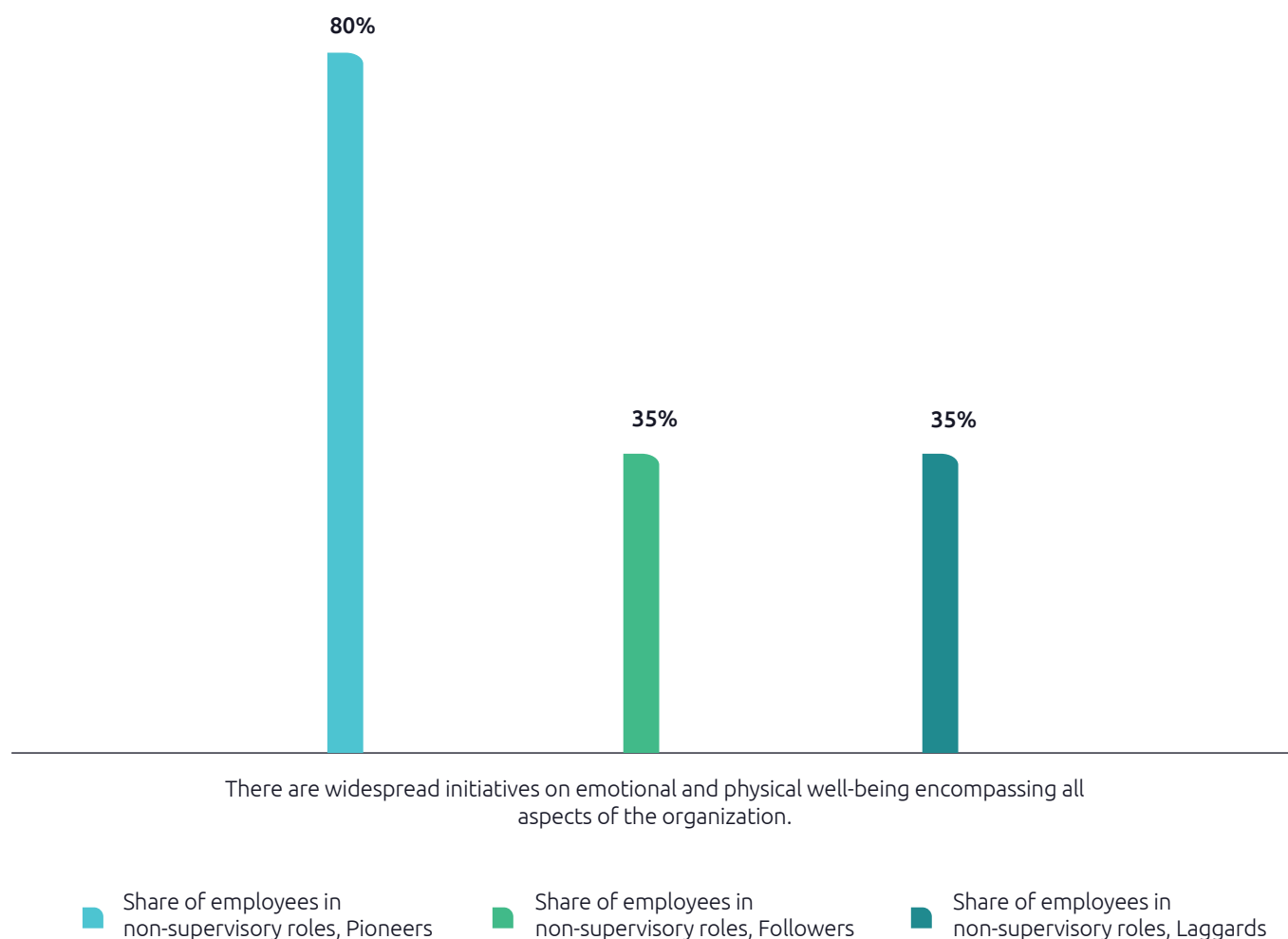
Leading organizations foster a sense of inclusion, safeguard employee well-being, and focus on sustainability

Our research reflects that Pioneers are ahead of other organizations in terms of fostering inclusion, safeguarding employees' mental and physical well-being and focusing on sustainability. As in Figure 14 shows, eight in 10 employees of Pioneers say that their organizations have established widespread initiatives on emotional and physical well-being encompassing all aspects of the organization, and that their top leadership is concerned about the same.

Figure 14

Employees of Pioneers strongly believe that their organizations have widespread initiatives to take care of their mental and physical health

% of employees in non-supervisory roles who believe there are widespread initiatives on emotional and physical well-being in their organization

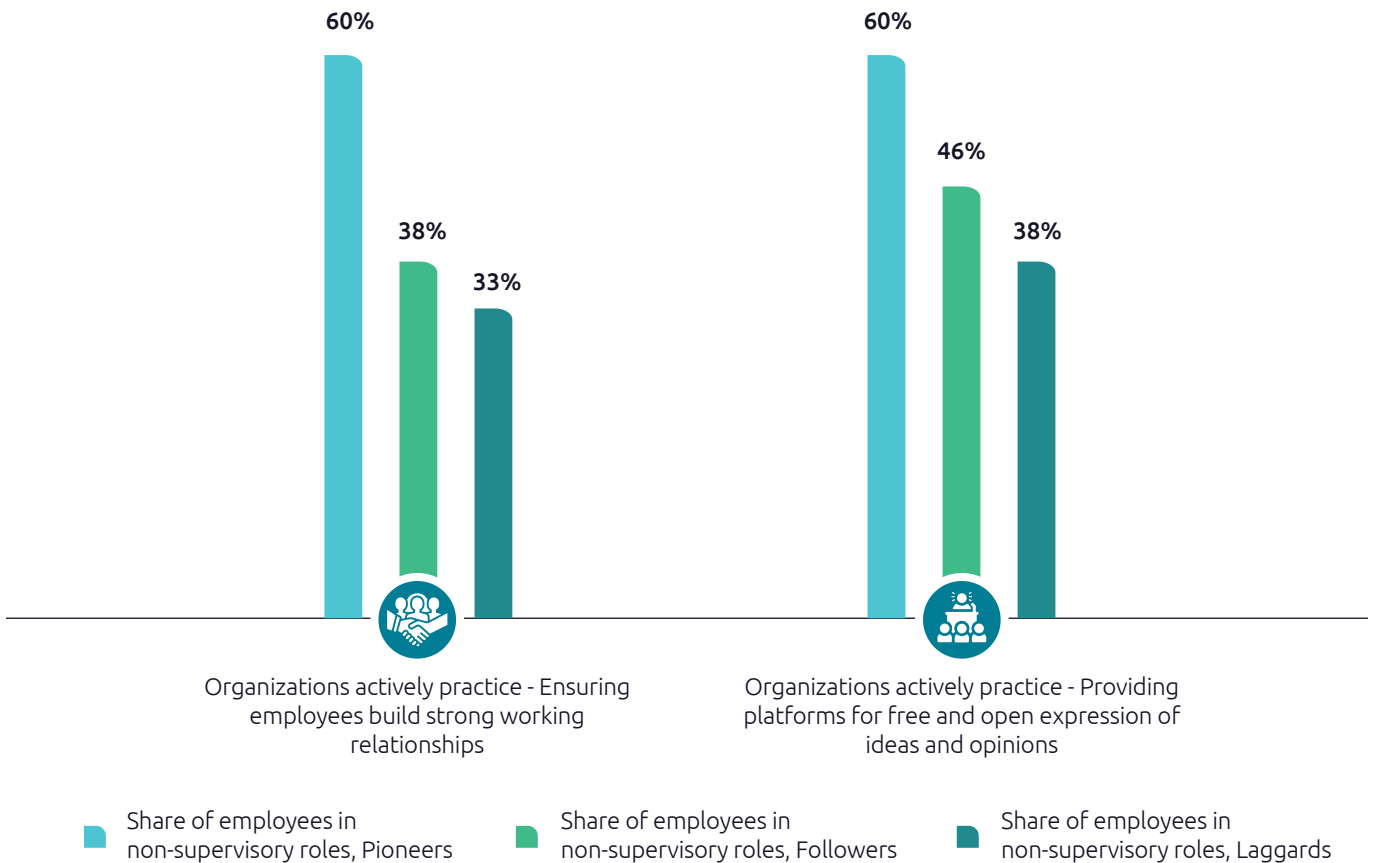


Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, with N=37 Pioneers, N=158 Followers, N=353 Laggards.

Similarly, Pioneers promote inclusion more actively than the rest (see Figure 15).

Figure 15 Employees of Pioneers strongly agree their organizations actively promote inclusion

% of employees in non-supervisory roles who believe their organizations actively promote inclusion



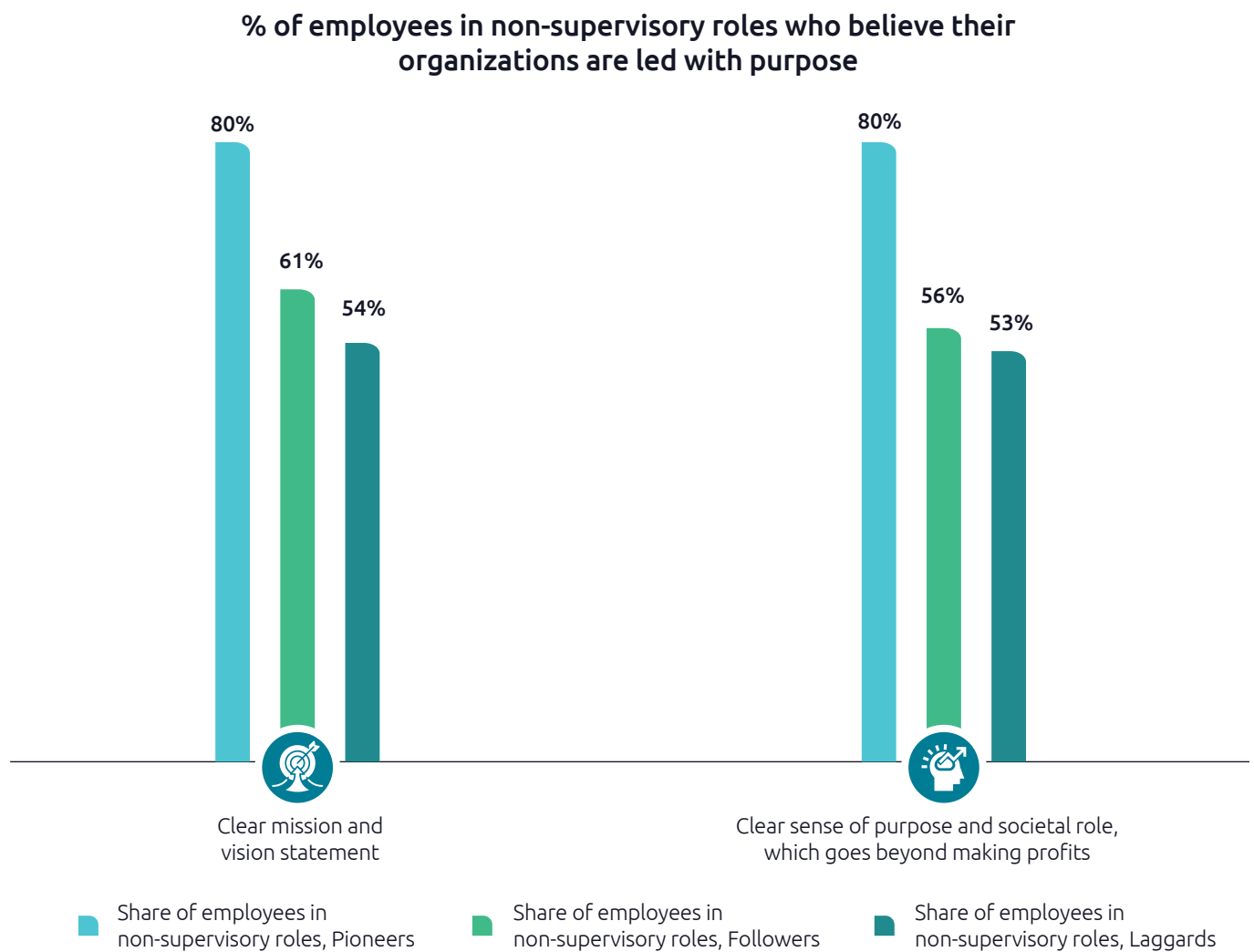
Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, with N=37 Pioneers, N=158 Followers, N=353 Laggards.

Employees of Pioneers also attest that their organizations promote sustainable initiatives; six in 10 employees say that their organization is actively reducing its carbon footprint, compared to only 33% and 37% of employees of Followers and Laggards, respectively.

Leading organizations provide clear-sighted, purpose-driven leadership

In the new business environment, many employees are putting purpose above results and profits. Of the employees we surveyed, 75% felt that it is important that leaders have a clear vision and lead with purpose, and not be motivated solely by sales targets and profit margins. We found that Pioneers fared much better on these aspects than the rest of the organizations (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 Employees of Pioneers believe that their organizations are led with purpose



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, with N=37 Pioneers, N=158 Followers, N=353 Laggards.

Pioneers also go the extra mile to sustain positivity and encourage their employees to foster a strong organizational culture. For example:

- 60% of employees of Pioneers agreed that their leaders ensured positive communication, maintained employee morale during the pandemic, compared to just 38% of employees of Followers, and 37% from Laggards.
- Similarly, 60% of employees of Pioneers say that their organizations incentivized those who exhibited strong cultural values, even during the difficult circumstances of the pandemic, as compared to 33% of employees of Followers and 31% of Laggards.

80% vs 54%

80% of employees of Pioneers say that their organizations have a clear vision and lead with purpose, compared to 54% of employees from Laggards.

4. ORGANIZATIONS NEED TO TAKE A SYSTEMS THINKING APPROACH TO HYBRID WORKING

Preparing for a hybrid future requires shifts in mindsets and skills, transformations in processes and policies, and agility and flexibility in business models. Human resources, as a function, will have a critical role to play in supporting organizations and top management steer the organization towards stable hybrid ways of working. In this section, we propose a few guiding principles for organizations and HR teams to consider as they embark on this journey of change.

What is a systems thinking approach to hybrid working?

As we showed in our digital culture research, it is difficult to transform culture by using a linear change approach that focuses on discrete interventions.¹⁶ In contrast to linear approaches, a systems thinking approach hinges on enacting multiple changes at the same time in order to effect holistic change. A systems thinking approach entails building a greater understanding of the linkages, relationships, and interactions among various factors that characterize an entire system. In the context of hybrid work, a systems thinking approach requires focusing on the interplay between various factors that together determine how effectively organizations can adapt for the future. For instance, while training leaders in required skillsets and attributes is a key element of adapting to a hybrid future, to bring about tangible change, it is equally important that organizations review their processes, policies, and KPIs to ensure the right behaviors and attributes are assessed and rewarded.

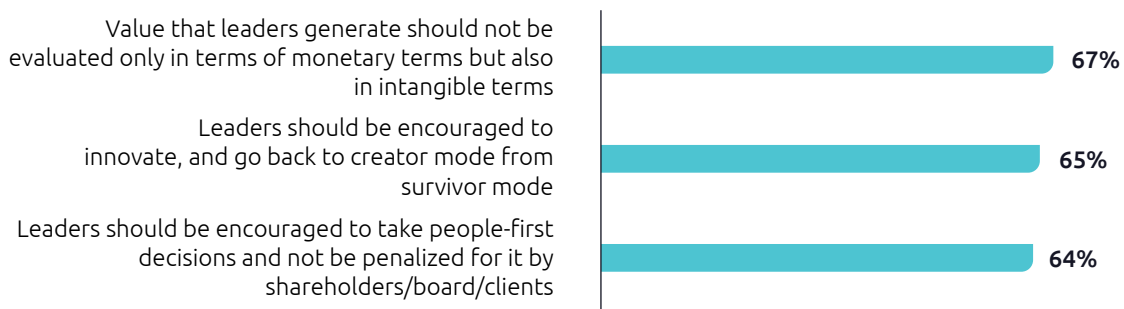
Design processes, systems and KPIs that focus more on people-centric leadership

Organizations need to build policies and processes that aid the transition towards people-centric leadership and create a cultural foundation that promotes such shifts.

Assessing leaders purely on financial KPIs may set them up for failure in the hybrid workplace. Organizations need to move beyond purely financial KPIs to focus more on behaviors and employee-related positive outcomes. As Figure 17 shows, 64% of respondents believe that leaders should be encouraged to take people-first decisions and not be penalized for it by shareholders, clients, and stakeholders.

Figure 17 Nearly 70% of respondents believe that the value that leaders generate should not be measured only in monetary terms but also in intangible terms

How can leaders be supported and enabled to lead organizations in the future?



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, N=461 leaders, N=460 mid-managers, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles.

Similarly for employees, performance will have to be assessed on positive outcomes and positive behaviors and not just on the basis of success and failures at tasks. Examples of positive outcomes include being helpful to new members in the team, keeping up team morale, being agents of change, among others.

Make the C-suite incarnate the new people-centric leadership

For critical leadership skillsets and attributes to take root in the organization, change has to be driven from the top. It is essential therefore that C-suite executives actively embody people-centric leadership behaviors such as empathy, authenticity, and transparency that will be key in hybrid work environments. A recent study assessed leaders on the extent to which they were viewed as good role models. The findings confirmed that leaders who were excellent role models were rated higher on their overall leadership effectiveness and were trusted more by their peers and employees.¹⁷

Focus on critical workplace behaviors

Trust

Studies suggest that many managers struggle to trust their employees in a completely remote workplace.¹⁸ Creating a culture of trust is the foundation for building strong teams; creating a positive work culture; and thereby producing favorable results, especially in the hybrid workplace. Engie's Emmanuel Tuchscherer affirms the importance of trust in the modern workforce, *"If you trust your staff, they will trust you. Have very transparent rules and ways of working, and be accountable. When you need to take a difficult decision, especially in difficult times, you must voice it at a very early stage of the decision-making process. And, finally, the last element of trust is to be able to shape a long-term perspective for long-term engagement of people. It is key for a leader to set a clear vision and to communicate it well."*

Trust, while critical cannot be built overnight and requires an incremental approach, where organizations start with small steps and move towards greater autonomy and empowerment. To build trust, leaders need to make team members more accountable for their actions and **reduce micromanagement**. This is especially critical in the context of remote work. As we heard from Professor Mark NK Saunders, professor of business research methods and director of global engagement, Birmingham Business School, *"Leadership behaviors that demonstrate trust towards their employees are about acting responsibly. These behaviors embody fair treatment of employees as well as transparent, honest, and frequent two-way communication with them. Trustworthy leaders listen and admit when they do not know. They take action to address issues responsibly,*

admit their mistakes, explain how these will be rectified and follow through on the necessary actions." Organizations can start by checking if employees are able to handle small tasks independently, and progressively reduce oversight as employees display greater abilities in handling tasks and meeting objectives on their own. According to our report on the future of work, although 78% of organizations say that they are focusing on providing more autonomy to employees, close to half (48%) of employees feel that they are being micromanaged in a remote setup. Another finding suggests that nearly 40% of managers believe that remote workers usually perform worse than those who work in an office.¹⁹

Organizations need to **decentralize accountability** among employees and team members, to allow them to be responsible for their own actions. New York-based media startup, theSkimm, for instance, has actively empowered its employees to take risks and "fail safely" through their weekly call-out of a (non-ironic) "Failure of the Week." If an employee tries something new but it doesn't work out, they're still recognized for taking the risk.²⁰

Organizations must also focus on **building trust by design** where principles of greater accountability, empowerment, and autonomy are built into various processes and policies. Organizations can also look to use tools such as the Trust Behavior Index to measure trust generating behaviors.²¹

Implement widespread initiatives on physical and mental well-being of employees

Fostering holistic well-being and a culture of health should be a priority for all leaders. This should involve:

- Going beyond curative measures and focusing on **preventive measures** to anticipate and avoid employee burnout.
- **Frequently conducting employee-listening programs and surveys** to gather feedback on what the workforce requires to feel happy and healthy at work. This will also feed into a structural knowledge of ideal working conditions in terms of working hours, methods, facilities, etc. Leaders should be able to access these results on interactive dashboards with visual aids, as this can fast-track action planning and communication of results. To monitor employee mental health, global banks such as HSBC and Bank of America conduct extensive employee-listening and feedback sessions and share perspectives. UK oil and gas multinational BP has also included mental-well-being questions in their regular employee surveys to understand in real time how teams are feeling and take responsive steps to build mental well-being into their culture.²²

- **Being open and communicating regularly about policy changes** relating to compensation and benefits, lay-offs, etc., to manage employee stress and anxiety. One recent study highlights that employees who feel their managers are not good at sharing organizational updates are 23% more likely than others to have experienced a decline in mental health since the COVID-19 outbreak.²³
- **Sharing personal experiences related to well-being and mental health** through webinars and special sessions. US-based biotech firm Roche Genentech arranged a campaign called #Let'sTalk in which senior leaders shared videos on the company intranet and talked about their mental health, raising and normalizing awareness of mental-health issues across the company.²⁴
- **Ensuring flexibility for new parents and employees dealing with stress** depending on specific demographics such as age, living conditions, and level of education, vulnerable groups could be treated differently. Additionally, a healthy work-life balance can be propagated. For example, professional-services multinational PwC announced that its employees will receive USD250 for every full week of vacation they take off.²⁵ Jason Fried, CEO of US software company Basecamp, announced that employees with any type of caretaking responsibilities could set their own schedules, even if that meant working fewer hours.²⁶

Additionally, organizations should provide employees with avenues to seek help – for instance, setting up dedicated employee resource groups where employees can access local community resources on mental health. Employee-assistance programs for diagnosis and treatment could also be made available, which can be extended to employees' family members.

Assess and customize training formats

Organizations need to assess which trainings and development programs will work best in this evolving context. While some traditional aspects of leadership, such as developing a vision and business strategy, will remain structurally significant, future leadership programs must integrate training in new skillsets, including components such as transparency, courage, trust, and EI, which will all be integral going forward.

With respect to employee trainings, organizations must not only conduct their own assessment of required trainings to build skills for the hybrid workplace, but also seek employees' perspective on the trainings they need to be better equipped. As we heard from Kelly Palmer, Chief Learning and Talent Officer, Degreed, *"Companies should give employees more agency over what to learn and help guide them in the right direction given career goals and business objectives. A great example of this is how the Visa L&D team reimagined its learning culture to one that is worker driven. Central to this effort was the creation of a learning technology system (powered by Degreed) through Visa University. The*

*technology ecosystem personalized and simplified learning for all 20,000 employees by curating content based on the individual's interest or needs and proactively recommending projects or assignments employees are qualified for across the company."*²⁷

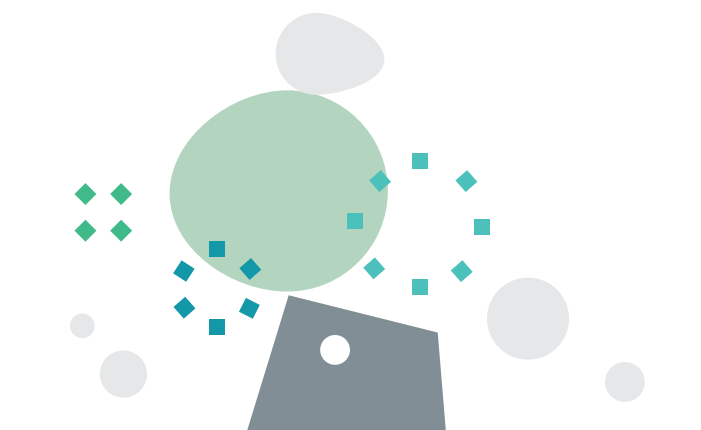
Enhance employee experience

Organizations must focus on enhancing the overall employee experience in the hybrid workplace, right from recruiting and onboarding, to their time in the organization with respect to their development, their engagement, how their leaders treat them in the workplace, to their exit, if and when they leave the organization. A lot of elements will be key determinants of the employee's experience within an organization. Over and above the points that have been discussed in this section earlier, some additional things to consider are shared below:

- Practice active listening and solicit employee feedback on what is working and what is not. Organizations will have to rethink engagement surveys to include some of these newer aspects of hybrid working into the people surveys.
- Ensure organizational policies such as performance appraisals, rewards, and benefits are geared towards the hybrid orientation of the workplace and are customized to ensure they are fair and just to all, irrespective of whether they are working remotely or from the office space.
- Use collaboration tools and technologies to make communication and inter and intra team collaborations smooth and efficient.

Employees today expect to derive a sense of purpose from their work and also care about sustainability and inclusion.

- Organizations must focus on creating an inclusive environment, even in the virtual/hybrid context, ensure strong commitment towards being a sustainable organization and have a clear purpose and ethical value systems, all of which will go a long way in furthering the employee experience.



CON CLUSION

The pandemic created unique challenges for organizations and leaders and as the situation continues to evolve, organizations will have to take certain bold steps to create the right leadership mindsets and behaviors and to sustain them by building the right systems, processes and policies. While leaders had to adapt rapidly to various changing contexts in the beginning of the pandemic, employees believe that leaders could have done better. In the coming years, organizations will need to radically alter their processes and systems to adapt to hybrid working, and focus on building key workplace attributes such as building trust, empathy, emotional intelligence, and authenticity, among others. Our report offers some concrete steps and recommendations that organizations can start taking today to prepare for the workplace of the future.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We carried out extensive research with both qualitative and quantitative components.

Executive Survey

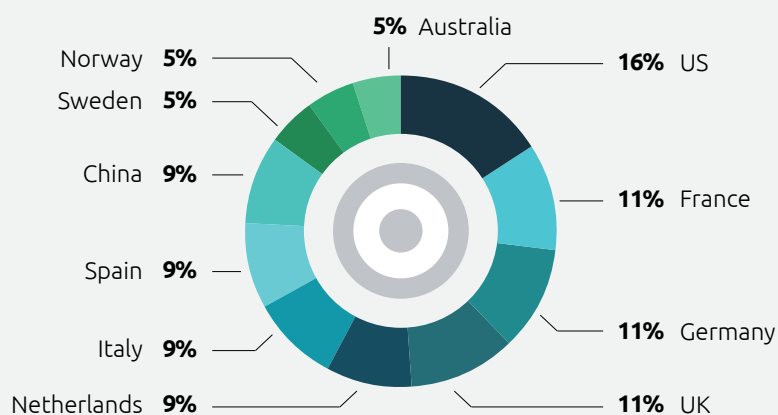
We conducted an online web-based survey, which was distributed amongst 1,380 executives belonging to 548 organizations, including 461 leadership executives, 460 mid-managers, and 459 employees in non-supervisory roles. The distribution of selected respondents and their organizations are as follows:

In-depth interviews

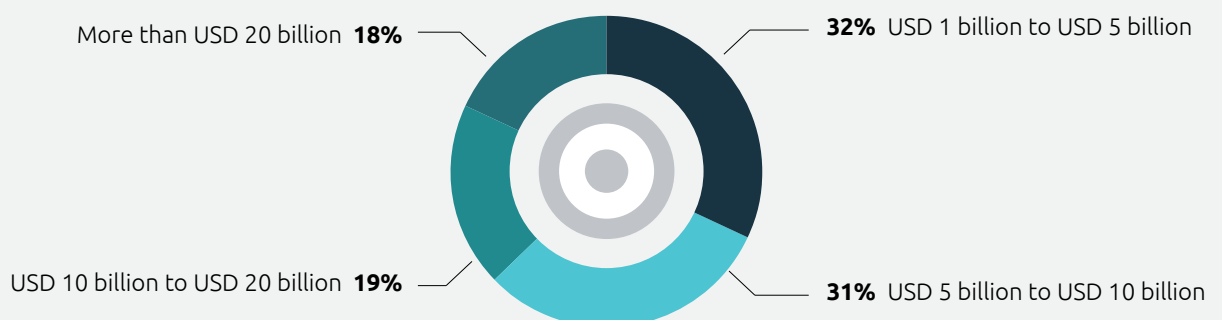
We conducted 21 in-depth interviews with industry experts, academics, and think tanks from various organizations and universities.

The study findings reflect the views of the people who responded to our online questionnaire for this research and are aimed at providing directional guidance. Please refer to the methodology for details of respondents and get in touch with a Capgemini expert to understand specific implications.

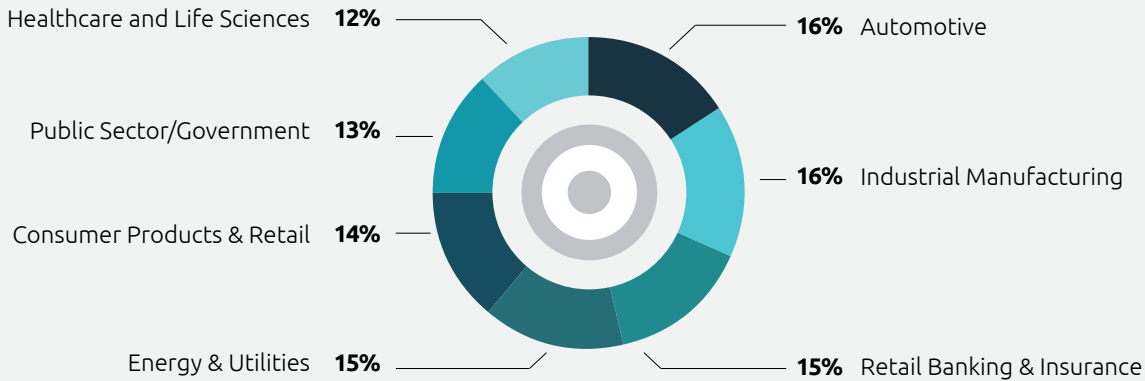
Country of headquarters of organizations



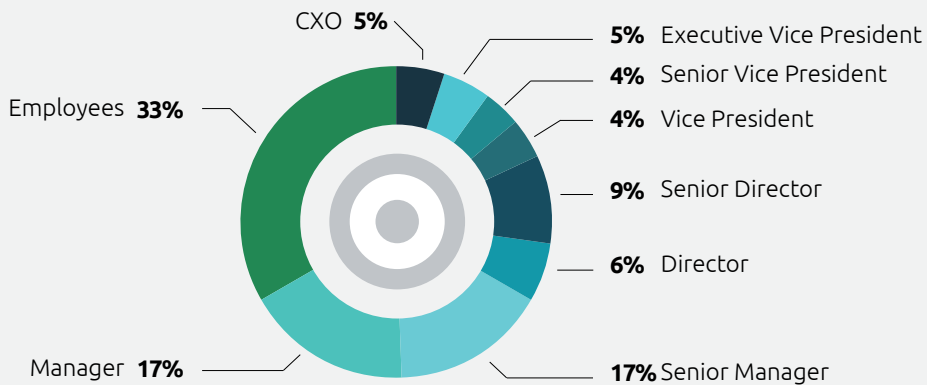
Annual revenue of organizations



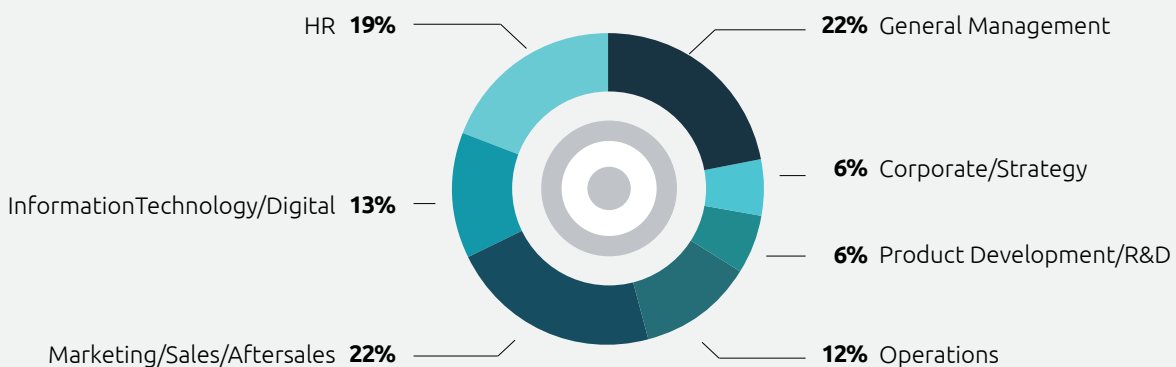
Sector distribution of organizations



Designation of executives



Functional areas of executives



Source: Capgemini Research Institute, Leadership practices survey, March–April 2021; N=548 organizations, with N=1380 executives (including N=461 leaders, N=460 mid-managers, N=459 employees in non-supervisory roles).

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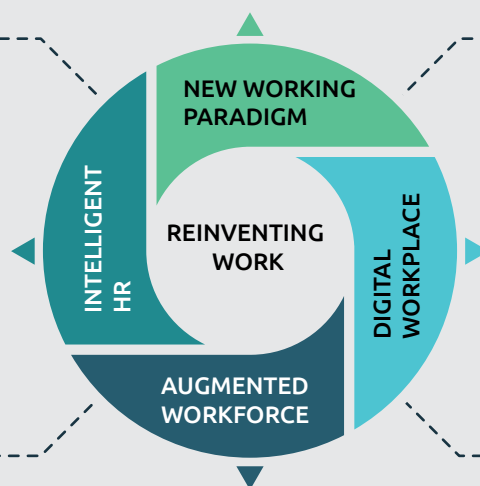
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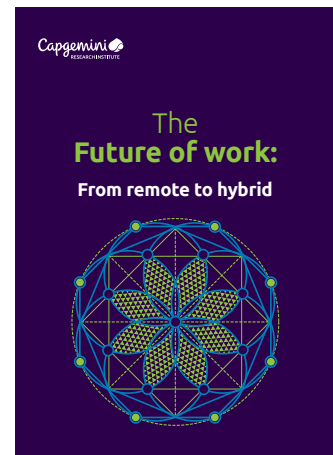
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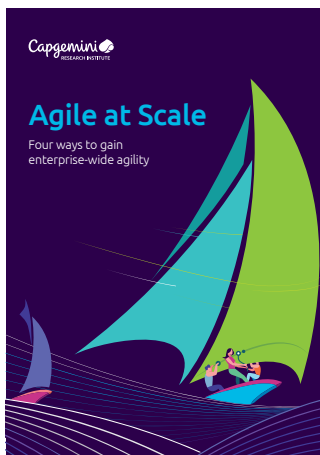
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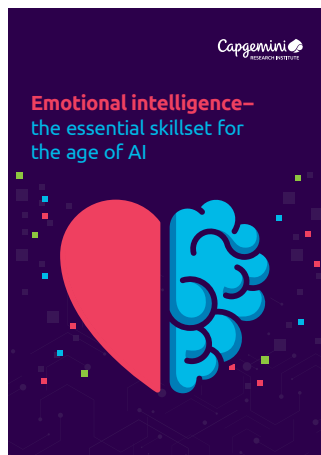
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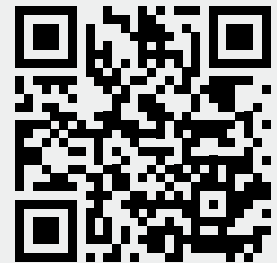


The Digital Culture Challenge:

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