

**THE FUTURE-READY LEADERSHIP - A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE****Dr.Dadala. Kanthi Sree**

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Abstract

Leadership is currently navigating through a period of significant change as the world around us rapidly evolves. As technology reshapes the way we work and communicate, leaders must develop new skills to adapt to these dynamic environments. The rise of remote and hybrid work models, along with the increasing diversity in the workforce, requires leaders to be more inclusive and adaptable in their leadership styles. Globalization and digital transformation are also impacting how leaders operate and make decisions. Sustainability and ethical leadership have become essential considerations for modern leaders, as the demand for socially responsible business practices continues to grow. Staying ahead of emerging trends and addressing complex challenges is crucial for leaders to thrive in this transformative phase.

This paper aims to explore the key forces that will influence leadership practices and management styles over the next two decades, focusing on areas like digital transformation, artificial intelligence, emotional intelligence, sustainability, and remote work. It stresses the importance of adaptive, ethical, and agile leadership in the face of global challenges, highlighting the need for leaders to possess traits and practices that can effectively navigate a multicultural, digital, and diverse workforce.

Keywords: Leadership, Globalisation Challenges, Digital Transformation.

Introduction

There is a transformation phase regarding leadership, given the pace of change in the global economy, technology, and society. At such speed, new skills, dynamic adaptation, and solutions to complex problems are required in order to stay ahead of emergence trends. The four areas given are fundamentally changing leadership for the future: technology and digital transformation, the shift to remote and hybrid work models, globalization and diversity in the workforce, and the increasing demand for sustainability and ethical leadership.

The world of the 21st century is dramatically changing, and emerging trends redefine leadership in new ways. Perhaps the greatest forces shaping leadership for the future originate from technology and digital transformation—a call for change in new leadership strategies to master ever more complex environments. Leaders will embrace innovation, data-driven decision making, and artificial intelligence as they create an adaptive and continuous learning culture within organizations that transition into digital ecosystems. This is not only changing how leaders lead their teams but also redefines the concept of leading as an enhancer and catalyst for change inside an ever-speeding digital landscape.

Importance of Future-Ready Leadership

A future-ready leader is one who can predict change, adapt quickly, and foster environments that can flourish with innovation, trust, and accountability. In today's world, organizations are becoming more digital, dispersed around the globe, and purpose-driven in their objectives; I

believe leaders should not only manage the day-to-day but also be visionaries to guide their organizations into an unpredictable future.

We are firmly of the opinion that leaders must acquire new skills, have a continuous learning mindset, and embrace inclusivity, sustainability, and ethics in managing future work effectively. It will enhance organizational performance but positively affect the greater global community as well.

The emergence of remote and hybrid work models creates new layers of complexity for leadership since geographical barriers are becoming increasingly irrelevant in the management of teams. In this setting, productivity, engagement, and collaborating can only be ensured by the leaders; at the same time, it is very crucial for maintaining unity and organizational culture. Cultural differences and diverse perspectives have to be respected in developing inclusive strategies. These trends, combined with the increasing focus on sustainability and ethical leadership, are changing the way leadership is perceived, practiced, and implemented across industries around the world.

Objectives

- To equip leaders with the knowledge and skills to leverage digital technologies effectively, drive digital transformation, and navigate the digital landscape.
- To identify and nurture potential leaders at all levels of the organization, providing them with the necessary skills and experiences to take on future leadership roles.
- To prepare future leaders to effectively address the complex and interconnected challenges of the 21st century, ensuring organizational success and positive societal impact in a rapidly evolving global environment.

Review of Literature

A. L. Green and D. T. Kumar conducted a study in (2024) on future trends in leadership and organizational management. Their research aimed to identify essential leadership qualities for effectively managing organizations in a rapidly changing business landscape. They focused on how adaptive leadership can help organizations face future challenges, especially due to global economic changes and the increase in remote work. The study followed 300 managers from various sectors over five years, using surveys to observe shifts in leadership practices. The findings suggest that leaders must prioritize adaptability, ongoing learning, and empathy to stay competitive. Additionally, leadership structures are shifting from hierarchical to more inclusive and participatory approaches.

C. H. Parker and M. J. Moore (2024) examined how artificial intelligence (AI) will influence leadership in the future. Their research focused on the expected changes in leadership roles and management practices over the next ten years. They aimed to understand how AI impacts decision-making, leadership functions, and organizational culture. To conduct this study, they used a mixed-method approach that included surveys of 500 middle and senior managers and interviews with 20 AI experts. The findings revealed that AI will enhance, not replace,



leadership. Future leaders must learn to combine human intuition with insights from AI to effectively lead their teams and organizations.

L. B. Taylor and H. R. Collins (2024) examined the link between leadership and sustainability in their study, "The Intersection of Leadership and Sustainability: Navigating the Future." Their research aimed to highlight the growing role of sustainability in leadership and its effects on organizational success. They explored how leaders need to adapt to include sustainability in both environmental and social aspects. To gather information, the study analyzed 25 companies that have successfully integrated sustainability into their leadership styles. The findings indicated that sustainable leadership is essential for the future. Leaders must encourage a culture of responsibility, openness, and long-term planning within their organizations.

D. S. Rogers and J. C. Williams (2024) examined how emotional intelligence (EI) impacts future leadership. Their research focused on the increasing significance of EI in shaping effective leadership practices. They aimed to understand how emotional intelligence can lead to success in today's changing business world. The study combined surveys from 500 managers and interviews with 30 executives to assess the role of EI in effective leadership. The findings indicate that emotional intelligence will be a crucial skill for leaders. Future management will depend on leaders' ability to understand and influence emotions, which will improve team dynamics.

T. N. Rodriguez and C. P. Marquez (2024) researched the link between sustainability and leadership for corporate management's future. They aimed to understand how integrating sustainability into leadership can shape future business strategies. The study focused on how sustainable leadership can help organizations thrive amid climate change and social responsibility. Researchers surveyed 300 managers from various industries and examined sustainability reports from 20 large corporations. The findings showed that leadership rooted in sustainability is crucial for tackling upcoming challenges. This approach fosters greater corporate responsibility, enhances stakeholder engagement, and encourages a move towards green innovation.

J. F. Hart, P. L. Myers (2024) researched Leadership in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: How Management is Evolving. The aim of the Research was to explore the integration of AI in leadership decision-making processes and its impact on future management strategies. The purpose of the Research was to investigate the potential benefits and challenges AI brings to leadership roles in various organizational contexts. The paper uses a mixed-methods approach, surveying 150 mid-level managers and interviewing 25 AI implementation experts. The study finds that AI will enhance decision-making but also highlights the need for leaders to retain a balance between technology and human judgment. AI will augment leadership, not replace it.

K. S. Brooks, M. A. Grant (2024) researched Evolution of Ethical Leadership: Navigating the Future. The aim of the Research was to explore how ethical leadership will evolve and the role it will play in shaping management practices in the future. The purpose of the Research was to analyze the growing demand for ethical leadership in the face of increasing public scrutiny and

global ethical dilemmas. The study used qualitative case studies from 15 global firms, complemented by surveys from 100 senior leaders. The study concludes that ethical leadership will become an integral part of management, emphasizing transparency, corporate social responsibility, and long-term value creation.

P. J. Henson, L. D. Fox(2024) researched the Impact of Remote Work on Leadership and Management: Looking Ahead. The aim of the Research was to explore how the shift to remote work will influence leadership dynamics and organizational management in the future. The purpose of the Research was to examine leadership adaptations to remote and hybrid work environments and their long-term implications for management strategies. The research used an online survey of 500 managers and in-depth interviews with 40 leaders from various sectors who have transitioned to remote work. The research concludes that remote work requires a more autonomous style of leadership, with an emphasis on trust, communication, and the ability to manage virtual teams effectively.

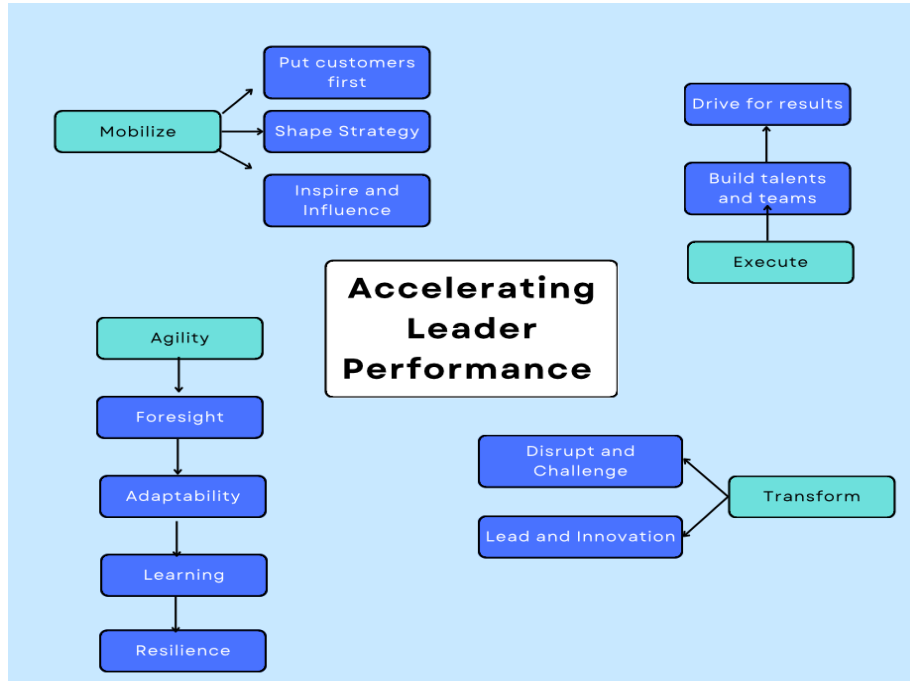
W. K. Johnson and L. M. D. Smith (2023) researched new leadership practices that could shape organizational management. The study aimed to identify these practices and their possible effects on management structures in the future. It explored how leadership may change as organizations respond to technology, globalization, and shifting workforce needs. The researchers used both surveys and interviews to collect data. They surveyed 200 senior managers and conducted interviews with 15 CEOs from different industries. The findings suggest that future leaders will work collaboratively, embrace technology, and prioritize emotional intelligence and cross-cultural skills. A major change is expected as companies begin to use AI and data analytics in their decision-making processes.

Leadership -Global trends

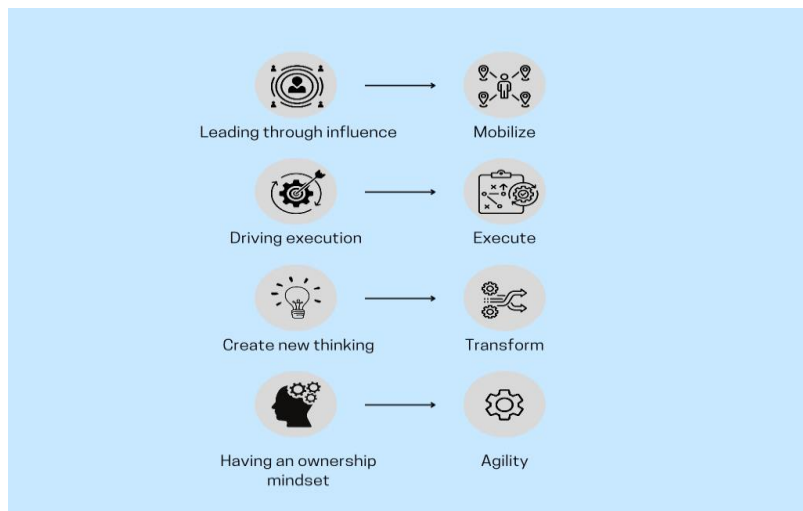
Country	Common Leadership Traits	Cultural Influences	Strengths	Potential Weaknesses
United States	Focused on independence, decisiveness, and achieving results, this approach emphasizes open and straightforward communication.	Focus on personal independence, competition, and success.	Innovation requires quick choices and strong motivation.	May come across as harsh or insensitive.

Japan	concentrate on Working together, reaching agreement, having a clear structure, and focusing on the long term.	Collectivism emphasizes unity and teamwork, values harmony among members and shows respect for those who are older or hold more experience.	Effective teamwork, careful attention to detail, and a clear vision for the future are essential.	Decision-making can often be slow, and there may be resistance to change.
Germany	Attentive, organized, analytical, detail-focused, and technically oriented.	Structure, regulations, productivity, skill.	Attention to detail, high standards, and careful planning are essential.	Can be inflexible, lack of spontaneity
China	Traditionally, leadership structures are hierarchical and authoritative, but there is a growing trend toward more collaborative approaches.	Confucianism, respect for authority, collectivism	Strong leadership, long-term planning, stability	Can be top-down, stifle individual initiative (in traditional styles)
Sweden	Democratic, participative, and consensus-driven principles support a good work-life balance.	Equality, cooperation, social welfare	Employee empowerment, high morale, work-life balance	Can be slow decision-making, lack of assertiveness

Leadership Challenges-Capabilities Required for Future-Ready leadership



Source:Heidrick & Struggles international.in



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Leading through influence: Leaders who use influence instead of just authority to drive action tend to be better at helping people connect with the organization's goals. This connection makes individuals feel like they are part of something greater, allowing them to contribute positively. Such a method promotes inclusion and builds trust between leaders and employees. It also helps leaders collaborate more effectively with

their teams, higher management, and the broader community where their companies operate.

Driving Execution: Executing plans effectively is essential for achieving financial, social, and environmental goals while fostering trust within the organization and the community. Leaders skilled in execution are capable of making difficult choices that benefit everyone involved and drive progress on important issues, even when faced with complex challenges.

Creating New Thinking: Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, business operations have changed dramatically. Workers now prefer collaborating in teams instead of working alone. This reveals a need for emotional connection and highlights how teamwork can lead to greater achievements. Combining different viewpoints, both from within the organization and beyond, often results in new ideas. For teams to succeed, inclusion is essential in maximizing their potential.

Having an ownership mindset: Leaders with an ownership mindset take responsibility for both their successes and failures. This mindset is crucial for resilience, a key part of being agile. When leaders feel in control of their actions, they can keep moving forward instead of being overwhelmed by circumstances. They consider not only financial results but also how well the organization treats employees and meets stakeholder expectations. This sense of ownership builds trust within the organization and the broader community. It fosters a culture of accountability that drives results and enhances team inclusion.

Leadership Practices in the near future

Many factors will define future leadership with all the technological and social changes happening fast in such organizations and societies. Such factors require leaders to transform their practice to stay effective with changing situations:

- a) **Technological changes:** The AI, automation, and data analytics revolution will transform the life of leaders in terms of decision-making management of teams. In this respect, leaders have to technologically increase productivity while remembering that there's the human factor of leadership too because most teams are working at a distance and making use of digital collaboration. This requires inclusive leadership because workforces are becoming increasingly diverse and global. Leaders will require cultural intelligence in managing people from different parts of the world, changing communication styles that are appropriate for different regions, and setting up conditions that appreciate diversity. All this will require equity in attention where every member's voice is respected and valued.

- b) **Ethical Leadership and Social Responsibility.** Business leaders are going to witness increasing pressures of consumers, employees, and governments for a response to society pressures and impact of their firm environment. Henceforth, the CSR in the business model would become adopted, whereas ethical considerations should be core to decisions. An approach that considers transparency, honesty, and following up with sustainability has to become an endeavor for developing stakeholder-friendly relationship building.
- c) **Crisis Management and Resilience:** The global lessons from the crisis of COVID-19 would urge resilient leadership. Future leaders will be expected to take the organization through uncertain moments, be on the ball to respond to situations quickly, and protect the continuance of their organizations. Crisis management would not only involve tactical planning but also form a need for maintaining morale and the unity of people while under stress within the organization. Future leadership will abandon traditional top-down, hierarchically-based models in favor of a more decentralized, collaborative, and participative type. There must be empowerment of teams; shared responsibility in the facilitation of a model; and readiness to innovate. In the fast business environment, agility will dominate; there will be quicker and iterative improvements, characterized by flexibility in decision-making.
- d) **EI:** A leader should be highly intelligent with EI, since the teams to be managed will increasingly be diversified and remote. A high requirement of EI skills would be necessary- empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal management-to facilitate a positive work environment and solve issues such as employee burnout, mental health issues, and interpersonal conflicts.
- e) **Innovation and Digital Transformation:** Amidst accelerating the pace of innovation in technologies, leaders must facilitate digital transformation in order to enable organizations to remain competitive and forward-looking. It involves adopting new technologies as well as an entrepreneurial culture with openness to innovation and risk, for continuous change..
- f) **Globalization:** Globalization is constantly changing the business dynamics. Global market complexities, managing cross-border teams, and working with global supply chain issues will become a leadership challenge. A leader needs to be aware of the culture, able to manage diverse perspectives, and sensitive to geopolitical risk and shifts in global economic climates.
- g) **Employee Well-being:** The leaders will increasingly be held accountable for the mental health and well-being of their teams. Leadership in the future will focus on the creation of an environment that supports psychological safety, reduces burnout, and provides work-life balance. The wellness programs must be implemented, and the holistic needs of the employees must be given priority in order to have a healthy and engaged workforce.

Role-modelling by current leaders

Leaders can model an ownership mindset by taking risks and admitting when they make mistakes or when things don't go as planned. They can encourage innovation by challenging their teams and providing support, such as organizing hackathons or setting aside time for creative thinking.

Coaching, both individually and in small groups, is an effective way for leaders to improve their skills and shift their attitudes about their roles. This approach also helps them develop their own coaching abilities, which they can pass on to their teams. Identifying leaders who are eager to engage in this way ensures that organizations have strong candidates in place. Using various data sources—like engagement levels and performance metrics—can help pinpoint these leaders.

For example, one international bank has implemented small-group coaching for senior executives across different departments. These leaders discuss how they can achieve their strategic goals together. By sharing insights, they reflect more on their leadership behaviors and better align their priorities. This collaboration enhances the organization's overall effectiveness. A global tech company has experienced similar results. In both cases, small-group coaching has helped leaders adopt a coaching mindset that strengthens the entire organization.

Changing Dynamics in Leadership

Traditionally, leadership was determined through hierarchy and authority and lately centralized decision-making. Leadership positions need to accommodate flexibility because corporations have grown into increasingly complex companies while businesses operate within an evolving global environment.

The global pandemic has accelerated trends that were already gaining momentum, such as digital transformation and remote work, exposing both the strengths and weaknesses of current leadership practices. Leadership in the 21st century requires a deeper understanding of technology, greater sensitivity to cultural and global diversity, and a commitment to sustainability and ethical practices.

Inclusive leaders actively seek diverse opinions and promote open communication. They aim to create a welcoming environment and must also recognize and address any unconscious biases within their organizations. This requires a strong emotional intelligence. Leaders need to understand different perspectives and develop policies that ensure fairness and equality.

Inclusive leadership also involves giving access to various groups. This can mean offering mentorship programs, leadership training, or changing hiring practices to attract a diverse range of talent. Purpose-driven leaders make sustainability and social responsibility key parts of their business strategies. They go beyond simply following environmental laws. They work to reduce their carbon footprint, improve labor practices, and support social initiatives.

Another important aspect of purpose-driven leadership is balancing profit with sustainability. Leaders must ensure their efforts do not harm the organization's financial health. True success comes from aligning business goals with social and environmental responsibilities.

Strategic Concepts for Ethical Decision-Making: Ethical leadership involves more than just avoiding illegal or unethical practices; it requires leaders to make decisions that reflect the company's values and positively impact society. Ethical leaders should be able to handle complex moral dilemmas, balancing the interests of shareholders, employees, customers, and the broader community.

Future leaders should consider positively the “shared value,” which suggests that businesses can achieve economic success by addressing social challenges. Nestlé has focused on creating shared value by improving nutrition in developing countries, while also expanding its market presence. When we align business goals with social outcomes, we can build stronger, and more sustainable organizations.

Leadership in a Virtual Environment: The pandemic forced many organizations to rapidly transition to remote work models, and even as the immediate crisis recedes, the shift toward hybrid and fully remote workplaces appears to be a lasting trend. According to Gartner, 82% of company leaders plan to allow employees to work remotely at least some of the time post-pandemic. The traditional leadership strategies—such as managing by presence—are no longer viable in a virtual environment. Leaders now need to rely on trust, clear communication, and outcome-based performance measures to ensure that teams remain productive and engaged. Remote leadership also requires digital fluency, as leaders must effectively utilize collaboration tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Slack to facilitate communication and teamwork.

The shift to remote work also requires leaders to be more empathetic, as employees face new challenges such as isolation, work-life balance, and burnout. Leaders who can offer flexibility, provide support, and create a sense of community will be more successful in managing virtual teams.

Managing Cross-Cultural Teams: Managing cross-cultural teams has become a critical aspect of leadership as organizations expand globally. Cross-cultural management requires leaders to be culturally intelligent, meaning they must understand and respect cultural differences and know how to direct them effectively.

Addressing Global Challenges with a Local Mindset: Globalization brings new opportunities, but it also introduces complexity. Leaders should be able to think globally while acting locally, meaning they should balance the needs of their global operations with the unique challenges of local markets. A multinational company may have a global strategy for sustainability, but local leaders should adapt this strategy to fit the specific environmental

and regulatory conditions of each market. Similarly, leaders may need to adjust their leadership style depending on the cultural and economic context in which they are operating.

Leaders should be agile and adaptable to handle these challenges. They should be willing to listen to local stakeholders, learn from local cultures, and adjust their strategies accordingly. This requires strong cross-cultural communication skills, as well as the ability to manage complexity and ambiguity.

Integrating Environmental and Social Responsibility: Environmental and social responsibility is no longer an optional add-on for businesses; it is a core component of modern leadership. Consumers, investors, and employees increasingly expect organizations to take a stand on issues like climate change, social justice, and ethical business practices. Leaders should develop strategies that integrate sustainability into all aspects of the business, from supply chain management to product development to employee engagement. Patagonia and Unilever have built their brands around sustainability, earning customer loyalty by prioritizing ethical practices.

Sustainability also requires leaders to think long-term. Short-term profitability may come at the expense of environmental degradation or social inequality, which can harm the company's reputation and bottom line in the future. Leaders who prioritize sustainability are better equipped to handle the complexities of the modern business environment and build resilient organizations.

Digital Literacy and Leadership in the Age of AI: Due to the use of artificial intelligence, machine learning, automation, and other advanced technologies, businesses have been fast-tracked in the digital transformation of recent years. McKinsey reports that AI can add \$13 trillion to the global economy by 2030, and leaders must be prepared to handle this wave of innovation.

Digital literacy will be a core competency of future leaders. Leaders need to know not only how the technology works but also its place in a business strategy. It will require an ability to see the big picture about how technology could drive efficiency and improve customer experience, creating a competitive advantage and at the same time anticipate what ethical and social implications these new technologies may entail. One of the challenges that leaders have to face in this digital age is to ensure that technology adoption does not come at the cost of human-centric leadership. Automation may cut costs and simplify processes, but leaders should focus on creativity, emotional intelligence, and strategic thinking. Such qualities are irreplaceable by machines. The leaders must also address the human side of technology impact on the workforce, like the displacement of jobs by automation. Again, here, technological advancement has to be balanced with the development of human capital.

Many companies have met future challenges by using new leadership strategies. For example, Netflix changed from a DVD rental service to a worldwide streaming leader because its leaders

focused on being flexible and making decisions based on data. This approach allowed Netflix to outshine its competitors and lead the streaming market by constantly refining its business model and using customer insights.

Unilever stands out in sustainability efforts. The company has gained a strong reputation and lasting profits by making ethical leadership and sustainability key parts of its business strategy. Unilever's pledge to cut its environmental footprint and support social responsibility has appealed to both consumers and many companies have met future challenges by using new leadership strategies. For example, Netflix changed from a DVD rental service to a worldwide streaming leader because its leaders focused on being flexible and making decisions based on data. This approach allowed Netflix to outshine its competitors and lead the streaming market by constantly refining its business model and using customer insights.

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Conclusion

Future trends are about technological changes, remote work, globalization, diversity, and sustainability. Therefore, the future leadership needs to equip itself with the fundamental skills that are going to propel it into the future world, making use of knowledge in this regard, which includes a basic understanding of technology, emotional intelligence, cultural awareness, and sustainability practice incorporated in leading activities, which brings in fresh challenges for the leader. Those who accept the concept of continuous learning, flexibility, and the right ethical choices will find a better future guiding their organization towards long-term prosperity. The new leadership would focus more on inspiring purpose, creating innovation, and making positive contributions to society and the environment. Transformative trends are making the leadership rethink the new line along which to redefine typical roles and old methods. Developing digital skills among leaders, making their worldview rich with a global aspect, and enhancing a culture with flexibility and innovations are required practices. With virtual and hybrid offices, the old ways of influencing employees are not as effective anymore; managers must bring in newer approaches, such as teamwork, amidst separation. Digital leadership walks on the balancing scale between technology-enabled skills and humans. The increasing focus on globalization, diversity, and ethics in decision-making requires responsible leadership that is all-inclusive. Leadership in the future should not just be profit-oriented but also socially and environmentally responsible; they should therefore commit to the ethical practice that focuses on the long-term.

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