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Conclusion and Future Directions in Leadership and Employee Engagement

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Introduction and Theoretical Foundations

The landscape of leadership and employee engagement is evolving rapidly, shaped by technological advancements, shifting workforce demographics, and the changing nature of work. As organisations adapt to these transformations, it is essential to consider how leadership and engagement will evolve to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future. Future directions in leadership and employee engagement are likely to focus on more inclusive, flexible, and technologically integrated approaches, with an emphasis on creating environments where employees feel empowered, connected, and aligned with organisational goals. To remain competitive, organisations must not only respond to these changes but also proactively shape their leadership strategies to enhance engagement in increasingly diverse and dispersed workforces. Leaders will need to combine digital capability with human-centred practices to sustain engagement across distributed teams (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). These shifts signal a paradigm change in leadership, where adaptability, relational competence, and technological fluency become foundational capabilities rather than optional enhancements.

One of the most significant trends shaping the future of leadership and employee engagement is the rise of digital and remote work. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of remote work models, highlighting the importance of digital tools and platforms in maintaining communication, collaboration, and engagement across geographically dispersed teams (Boccoli et al., 2024). As hybrid work becomes the norm, leaders will need to adopt new practices that leverage technology to foster connection, build trust, and support employees' well-being. This shift requires leaders to develop skills in virtual communication, digital literacy, and emotional intelligence, ensuring that employees remain engaged even when working outside of traditional office environments (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). Forward-looking leaders will need to anticipate how emerging technologies reshape work rhythms, team cohesion, and employee expectations—not just react to them.

Additionally, as workforce demographics continue to diversify, future leadership will need to focus on inclusivity and equity to maintain high levels of engagement. Employees increasingly expect their leaders to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), and to create workplaces where everyone feels valued and empowered. Inclusive leadership is not just about addressing inequality—it's about actively fostering a culture where diverse perspectives are heard, respected, and integrated

into decision-making (Morgan et al., 2025). As the global workforce becomes more diverse in terms of race, gender, age, and cultural background, leaders must adopt practices that promote inclusivity and leverage diversity as a strength to enhance engagement and innovation (Naseer et al., 2024). As demographic complexity increases, leaders must develop cultural agility to interpret and respond to diverse motivational drivers and work identities.

Theoretical foundations for understanding future directions in leadership and employee engagement can be explored through several key frameworks. Transformational leadership theory, developed by Bass (1985), remains highly relevant as organisations continue to evolve. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their teams by creating a compelling vision for the future, fostering innovation, and promoting a sense of shared purpose. As the workforce becomes more dynamic and complex, transformational leadership will continue to play a crucial role in engaging employees by aligning individual and organisational goals. However, the future of transformational leadership may involve a greater emphasis on flexibility, adaptability, and fostering engagement in virtual and hybrid work settings (Boccoli et al., 2024). This evolution indicates that traditional leadership models will need to be recalibrated for environments where connection and visibility are mediated through technology.

Inclusive leadership, as described by authors such as Bourke and Dillon (2016), is expected to gain further prominence as leaders work to create equitable and diverse work environments. Inclusive leadership involves behaviours such as actively seeking out diverse perspectives, fostering an open and respectful culture, and addressing systemic barriers to inclusion. This leadership style promotes engagement by ensuring that all employees feel seen, heard, and valued, regardless of their background. As globalisation and social movements continue to shape workplace expectations, inclusive leadership will become a central pillar of employee engagement strategies, enabling organisations to attract, retain, and engage a diverse workforce (Morgan et al., 2025). Future engagement strategies will increasingly hinge on leaders' ability to cultivate belonging across boundaries of identity, geography, and work modality.

Digital leadership is another emerging area of focus as technology continues to transform the way we work. Digital leadership involves the ability to leverage technology to drive innovation, enhance communication, and support remote and hybrid workforces. Leaders in the digital age must be proficient in using digital tools and platforms to create engaging and collaborative work environments. Moreover, they must understand the implications of digital transformation on organisational culture and employee well-being. The future of digital leadership will involve striking a balance between leveraging technology for efficiency and ensuring that employees remain connected, engaged, and supported in an increasingly virtual world (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). The leaders who thrive in this digital era will be those who can translate technological possibilities into meaningful, human-centred work experiences.

Agile leadership, inspired by the agile methodology in software development, is also expected to shape the future of leadership and engagement. Agile leadership fo-

cuses on flexibility, adaptability, and continuous improvement, encouraging leaders to foster a culture of rapid iteration and feedback. In an increasingly fast-paced and uncertain business environment, agile leadership offers a framework for engaging employees by involving them in decision-making, encouraging innovation, and promoting a culture of collaboration (Alexopoulos et al., 2024). Agile leadership will be critical for maintaining engagement as organisations face ongoing disruption and change, helping teams to stay focused, adaptable, and resilient. Emerging evidence highlights the leader's role in curating the context for agility, enabling conditions that sustain adaptation over time (Alexopoulos et al., 2024). Agility will become a central leadership currency as continuous disruption becomes a defining feature of organisational life.

Servant leadership, as introduced by Greenleaf (1970), will continue to influence the future of leadership and employee engagement. In a world where employees are increasingly seeking meaningful work and purpose, servant leadership offers an approach that prioritises the well-being and development of employees. Future servant leaders will focus on fostering environments where employees are supported in their personal and professional growth, leading to higher levels of engagement and satisfaction (Aboramadan et al., 2022). This leadership style is likely to become even more important as organisations place greater emphasis on employee well-being and work-life balance, both of which are key drivers of long-term engagement (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). In an era of heightened employee expectations, servant leadership offers a compelling blueprint for fostering trust, loyalty, and sustained engagement.

Job crafting theory, developed by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), will also play a significant role in shaping future engagement strategies. Job crafting refers to the ways in which employees proactively modify their jobs to better align with their strengths, interests, and aspirations. As the workforce continues to evolve, employees are increasingly seeking roles that offer autonomy, flexibility, and opportunities for personalisation. Leaders who support job crafting by empowering employees to shape their roles and responsibilities will enhance engagement by creating a work environment that is tailored to individual preferences and strengths (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Job crafting will be particularly relevant in a future where employees seek more meaning and autonomy in their work. As a result, leaders who empower personalised role evolution may unlock deeper engagement and stronger long-term retention.

Psychological safety, introduced by Edmondson (1999), will remain a cornerstone of future leadership practices that enhance engagement. Psychological safety refers to the belief that employees can express their ideas, take risks, and make mistakes without fear of negative consequences. Leaders who foster psychological safety create an environment where employees feel empowered to innovate, collaborate, and engage fully in their work (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2012). As organisations continue to navigate uncertainty and change, psychological safety will be crucial for maintaining engagement by ensuring that employees feel supported and valued, even in challeng-

ing circumstances. Leaders who prioritise psychological safety will be better equipped to engage their teams and drive innovation. Foundational reviews also link psychological safety to learning behaviours and performance in teams (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2012). Future-ready leaders will need to normalise learning through experimentation, encouraging teams to iterate, question, and innovate without fear.

Sustainable leadership, as described by Avery and Bergsteiner (2011), will also shape the future of leadership and engagement. Sustainable leadership focuses on long-term thinking, ethical decision-making, and the well-being of both employees and the broader society. As organisations increasingly recognise their social and environmental responsibilities, sustainable leadership practices will become essential for attracting and engaging employees who seek purpose-driven work (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Leaders who adopt sustainable practices, such as promoting work-life balance, environmental stewardship, and ethical leadership, will foster higher levels of engagement by aligning organisational values with the personal values of their employees. Such approaches also strengthen organisational legitimacy, an increasingly important asset in a value-driven global marketplace. Recent syntheses position sustainability leadership as a distinctive capability that integrates moral purpose, stakeholder value creation, and employee engagement to sustain performance over time (Zoogah and Degbey, 2025).

Artificial intelligence (AI) and automation are expected to have a profound impact on the future of leadership and employee engagement. As AI and automation reshape job roles and organisational structures, leaders will need to find new ways to engage employees in an increasingly digital and automated workplace. While AI can enhance efficiency and productivity, it also raises concerns about job displacement and the erosion of meaningful work. Leaders must balance the adoption of AI with strategies that maintain human engagement, such as upskilling employees, providing opportunities for creative work, and fostering a sense of purpose in an increasingly automated world. Leaders can also draw on ethical AI decision frameworks in HRM to ensure fairness, intelligibility, and accountability when deploying AI for talent and engagement processes (Rodgers et al., 2023). AI can also be leveraged to personalise engagement strategies, using data analytics to identify individual and team needs and tailor support accordingly. Frameworks that map perceptions, judgments, and information use can guide responsible AI-supported HR decisions (Rodgers et al., 2023). As AI becomes woven into everyday work, leaders will play a critical role in reinforcing the meaning, fairness, and transparency of technology-enabled decisions.

Practical Strategies and Managerial Implications

As organisations navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of leadership and employee engagement, it is essential to adopt forward-looking strategies that are aligned with

future trends. Leaders must be proactive in integrating digital tools, promoting inclusivity, and fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation to ensure that employees remain engaged, motivated, and aligned with organisational goals. Below are several practical strategies and managerial implications that can help leaders prepare for and respond to future challenges in leadership and employee engagement.

Leveraging Digital Tools for Remote and Hybrid Workforces

One of the most significant trends shaping the future of leadership is the rise of remote and hybrid work. Leaders must adopt digital tools and platforms that facilitate communication, collaboration, and engagement across geographically dispersed teams (Boccoli et al., 2024). Boccoli et al. (2024) find that leaders' digital communication competence can significantly strengthen employees' sense of support and connection in remote contexts, thereby enhancing engagement. This includes implementing video conferencing, instant messaging, project management software, and employee engagement platforms that allow for real-time feedback and connection (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). In this context, digital leadership maturity will be a defining differentiator between organisations that merely function remotely and those that flourish.

To keep employees engaged in remote settings, leaders should establish clear communication protocols and ensure that team members have access to the necessary resources and support. Regular virtual check-ins, team meetings, and one-on-one discussions can help maintain a sense of connection and accountability. Additionally, leveraging digital engagement platforms can help leaders monitor employee sentiment, gather feedback, and identify areas for improvement in engagement strategies. By creating a virtual environment that mirrors the support and collaboration of an in-person office, leaders can foster engagement even in a remote work context (Cortellazzo et al., 2019).

Another key strategy for engaging remote and hybrid teams is the use of asynchronous communication tools. These tools allow employees to collaborate and share information on their own schedules, accommodating the flexibility that many workers now expect. Leaders should encourage the use of collaborative platforms such as shared documents, task management software, and knowledge-sharing tools, ensuring that team members can contribute and stay engaged regardless of time zone or location (Boccoli et al., 2024). Leaders' digital communication competence amplifies support-to-engagement pathways in remote settings (Boccoli et al., 2024).

Fostering an Inclusive Leadership Approach

Inclusive leadership is becoming increasingly important as organisations strive to create diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. Leaders must actively promote inclusivity by fostering a culture where diverse perspectives are valued and integrated into decision-making processes (Morgan et al., 2025). This requires addressing systemic barriers to inclusion and creating opportunities for underrepresented groups to have a voice in the organisation.

Leaders can implement inclusivity by establishing employee resource groups (ERGs), which provide a platform for employees from different backgrounds to connect, share experiences, and contribute to organisational initiatives. Additionally, leaders should engage in regular diversity and inclusion training to better understand unconscious biases and develop strategies for mitigating them. By demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity, leaders not only enhance engagement but also drive innovation, as diverse teams are more likely to generate creative and effective solutions to complex problems. Inclusive leadership strengthens perceived insider status and relational coordination, supporting positive behaviours and engagement (Naseer et al., 2024). Inclusive leadership also requires leaders to be transparent and accountable when it comes to diversity and inclusion metrics. By setting measurable goals related to representation, pay equity, and employee satisfaction, leaders can track progress and make necessary adjustments to their strategies. This level of transparency builds trust and shows employees that the organisation is genuinely committed to creating an inclusive and equitable work environment (Morgan et al., 2025). Ultimately, inclusive leadership is not an HR initiative but a strategic capability that determines organisational resilience and innovation potential.

Supporting Job Crafting and Personalised Development Opportunities

As employees increasingly seek more autonomy and meaning in their work, leaders must adopt strategies that support job crafting and personalised development opportunities. Job crafting allows employees to take ownership of their roles, modify their responsibilities, and align their work with their strengths and interests. Leaders can facilitate job crafting by encouraging employees to identify areas of their jobs that can be reshaped to increase engagement and motivation (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

One practical strategy is to offer employees the flexibility to explore new projects or roles within the organisation that align with their career goals. Leaders should also provide opportunities for lateral moves or cross-functional collaborations, which can help employees gain new skills and perspectives. By creating an environment where

employees have the freedom to shape their roles, leaders foster a sense of purpose and engagement that goes beyond traditional job descriptions.

Personalised development opportunities are another key driver of engagement. Leaders should implement individualised learning and development plans that reflect each employee's career aspirations and strengths. This might involve offering access to online learning platforms, mentorship programs, or leadership development workshops. By investing in employees' professional growth, leaders demonstrate that they value their long-term potential, which in turn enhances engagement and loyalty (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). By embedding personalised development into everyday leadership routines, organisations strengthen their long-term talent pipelines.

Enhancing Psychological Safety in the Workplace

Psychological safety is critical for fostering an engaged and innovative workforce. Leaders must prioritise creating an environment where employees feel safe to share their ideas, take risks, and make mistakes without fear of negative consequences. Psychological safety encourages employees to engage fully in their work and contribute to the organisation's goals (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2012).

Leaders can promote psychological safety by encouraging open communication and feedback. Regularly soliciting input from employees through anonymous surveys, focus groups, or town hall meetings can help identify areas where employees may feel uncertain or unsupported. Leaders should also model vulnerability by admitting their own mistakes and encouraging a growth mindset within their teams. By framing challenges and setbacks as learning opportunities, leaders foster a culture of continuous improvement where employees feel safe to take risks and experiment with new ideas (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2012).

It is also important for leaders to create an environment of trust and mutual respect. This can be achieved by demonstrating empathy, listening actively to employees' concerns, and addressing conflicts or issues in a constructive manner. When employees feel respected and supported, they are more likely to engage deeply in their work and contribute to the organisation's success (Nembhard and Edmondson, 2012). Psychological safety will serve as the bedrock for collaborative intelligence—an asset increasingly vital for navigating ambiguity.

Embracing Agile Leadership to Foster Engagement in a Dynamic Environment

Agile leadership, inspired by the principles of agile methodology, is well-suited for organisations operating in fast-paced and constantly changing environments. Agile leadership focuses on adaptability, collaboration, and iterative feedback, all of which are essential for maintaining engagement in today's dynamic workplace. Leaders who adopt agile practices create a culture of continuous improvement, where teams are empowered to make decisions, experiment with new approaches, and adjust quickly to changing circumstances (Alexopoulos et al., 2024).

One practical way to implement agile leadership is by breaking down projects into smaller, manageable tasks and setting short-term goals. This allows teams to see immediate progress and maintain momentum, which enhances engagement. Leaders should also encourage frequent feedback loops, where employees can provide input on processes, suggest improvements, and adjust their work based on real-time information (Alexopoulos et al., 2024).

Agile leaders should also focus on decentralising decision-making, empowering employees to take ownership of their work and make decisions autonomously. This creates a sense of accountability and engagement, as employees feel directly responsible for the outcomes of their efforts. By fostering a culture of trust and collaboration, agile leaders can keep teams motivated and engaged, even in the face of rapid change (Alexopoulos et al., 2024). In an unpredictable environment, leadership effectiveness will be measured by the ability to pivot without losing team cohesion or clarity.

Balancing Technology and Human Connection in Digital Leadership

As organisations continue to adopt digital tools and platforms, leaders must find ways to balance the efficiency of technology with the need for human connection. Digital leadership involves using technology to enhance communication, collaboration, and engagement while ensuring that employees feel connected and supported (Cortellazzo et al., 2019).

Leaders can balance technology and human connection by using digital tools to facilitate meaningful interactions rather than replacing them. For example, video calls and virtual team-building activities can help maintain a sense of connection in remote teams. Leaders should also be mindful of the potential for digital fatigue and provide opportunities for employees to disconnect and recharge. By maintaining a balance between technology and human connection, leaders ensure that employees remain engaged and supported in a digital work environment (Cortellazzo et al.,

2019). Human connection will remain a non-negotiable anchor even as digital systems become more sophisticated.

Integrating Sustainable Leadership for Long-Term Engagement

Sustainable leadership is essential for fostering long-term engagement by prioritising ethical decision-making, employee well-being, and organisational resilience. Leaders who adopt sustainable leadership practices focus on the long-term impact of their decisions, ensuring that the organisation's actions align with both environmental and social responsibilities (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Operationally, sustainability leadership clarifies governance, metrics, and employee-voice mechanisms that embed responsibility into everyday work, reinforcing engagement through shared purpose (Zoogah and Degbey, 2025).

To implement sustainable leadership, leaders should integrate sustainability goals into their strategic planning and communicate these goals to employees. This might involve promoting environmental initiatives, supporting work-life balance, or implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs that align with the organisation's values. By aligning the organisation's mission with broader societal goals, leaders create a sense of shared purpose that enhances engagement and commitment (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011).

Leaders should also focus on promoting employee well-being by offering flexible work arrangements, mental health support, and opportunities for recovery. By prioritising employee well-being, leaders ensure that engagement is sustained over the long term, even as employees navigate the challenges of a rapidly changing work environment (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). By prioritising sustainability, leaders not only future-proof their organisations but also enhance their social contract with employees. This approach also equips leaders to balance value creation for people, planet, and profit without diluting engagement outcomes (Zoogah and Degbey, 2025).

Challenges

While the future of leadership and employee engagement offers exciting opportunities, it also presents several challenges that leaders must navigate. One of the primary challenges is managing the complexity of a hybrid workforce. As remote and hybrid work models become more prevalent, leaders face the difficulty of ensuring consistent engagement across both in-office and remote employees. Maintaining communication, fostering collaboration, and building team cohesion can be challenging in a

dispersed workforce, particularly when employees have varying levels of access to technology or face different time zone constraints. Leaders must find ways to keep all team members equally engaged, regardless of their location, while avoiding the risk of remote employees feeling isolated or disconnected from the organisation (Boccoli et al., 2024). The leaders who excel will be those who can harmonise the experiences of remote and on-site employees into a unified engagement ecosystem.

Another challenge is managing the impact of digital transformation on employee engagement. While digital tools can enhance efficiency and communication, there is a risk that over-reliance on technology could lead to digital fatigue or a reduction in meaningful human interactions. Leaders must strike a balance between leveraging technology to improve engagement and ensuring that employees do not feel overwhelmed by constant digital connectivity (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). The challenge is not merely adopting technology, but integrating it in ways that amplify rather than erode human connection. In addition, leaders must consider the impact of automation and artificial intelligence (AI) on job roles, ensuring that employees continue to find meaning and purpose in their work even as routine tasks become automated (Rodgers et al., 2023).

The increasing emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) also presents challenges for leaders, particularly in managing diverse teams with varying needs and expectations. While inclusive leadership is essential for fostering engagement, leaders may struggle to create environments that truly address systemic inequalities or ensure that all voices are heard. Moreover, leaders must navigate potential conflicts or tensions that may arise as they work to integrate diverse perspectives into decision-making processes. Ensuring that inclusivity goes beyond tokenism and translates into real, measurable outcomes will be a critical challenge for leaders in the future (Morgan et al., 2025). Such tensions require leaders to exercise cultural intelligence and navigate complex dynamics with sensitivity and transparency.

Another challenge is balancing short-term performance with long-term sustainability. As organisations face increasing pressure to achieve immediate results, leaders may be tempted to prioritise short-term goals over long-term employee engagement and well-being. However, sustainable leadership requires a focus on ethical decision-making, employee development, and organisational resilience. Leaders must find ways to balance these competing demands, ensuring that they do not sacrifice long-term engagement for short-term gains (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011). Balancing these priorities demands a leadership mindset that resists short-termism in favour of sustained value creation. Sustainability leadership offers a practical compass for navigating these tensions, emphasising sense-making, moral courage, and stakeholder dialogue to maintain engagement during trade-offs (Zoogah and Degbey, 2025).

Finally, measuring the impact of future leadership practices on employee engagement remains a complex challenge. Traditional engagement surveys and metrics may not fully capture the nuances of engagement in a rapidly changing work environment. Leaders must develop new ways to assess engagement, using real-time feed-

back, sentiment analysis, and other innovative tools to track employee sentiment and identify areas for improvement. However, finding the right balance between quantitative and qualitative data and ensuring that engagement strategies are data-driven without being overly mechanistic will be an ongoing challenge (Rodgers et al., 2023).

Future Trends

Several emerging trends will shape the future of leadership and employee engagement. One of the most significant trends is the growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning into leadership practices. AI-powered tools will enable leaders to gather and analyse real-time data on employee engagement, productivity, and well-being, allowing for more personalised and targeted engagement strategies. For example, AI can help leaders identify patterns in employee behaviour, predict potential disengagement, and recommend tailored interventions. The use of AI for personalised employee experiences—such as customised learning paths, wellness programs, or career development opportunities—will become increasingly common, allowing leaders to support employees more effectively (Rodgers et al., 2023). AI will increasingly become a co-partner in leadership decision-making, augmenting rather than replacing the leader's relational and ethical judgment.

Another important trend is the shift toward purpose-driven leadership. As employees increasingly seek meaningful work and alignment with their personal values, leaders will need to focus on creating purpose-driven cultures. Organisations that prioritise social responsibility, sustainability, and ethical leadership will be more likely to attract and engage employees who are motivated by purpose. Leaders will need to be intentional in aligning organisational values with employee expectations, ensuring that their leadership practices reflect a commitment to both social and environmental sustainability (Durand and Ioannou, 2023). Purpose-driven cultures enable organisations to differentiate themselves in competitive labour markets where meaning is a key retention driver. Accordingly, sustainability leadership is likely to become a dominant organising frame for future leadership development and engagement strategy (Zoogah and Degbey, 2025).

The continued rise of remote and hybrid work models will also influence leadership practices. Leaders will need to develop skills in virtual leadership, including managing teams across time zones, fostering collaboration in digital spaces, and maintaining engagement without face-to-face interaction. The use of asynchronous communication tools and virtual engagement platforms will become essential for creating a sense of connection and community in remote teams. Leaders will also need to be mindful of the potential challenges of remote work, such as digital fatigue and work-life balance, and develop strategies to address these issues (Boccoli et al., 2024).

Virtual leaders will therefore need not only technical fluency but also emotional range to sustain engagement at a distance.

Another key trend is the increasing focus on employee well-being and mental health. As the boundaries between work and personal life become more blurred, leaders will need to prioritise the mental and emotional well-being of their employees. This may involve offering flexible work arrangements, providing access to mental health resources, and creating a culture of openness where employees feel comfortable discussing their well-being. Leaders who prioritise employee well-being will be better positioned to foster long-term engagement and loyalty (Ogbonnaya et al., 2024). Well-being will shift from a discretionary benefit to a strategic imperative linked to performance, innovation, and retention.

The rise of cross-generational leadership is also expected to shape the future of leadership and engagement. As the workforce becomes more diverse in terms of age, leaders will need to adopt practices that cater to the unique needs and expectations of different generations. This includes understanding the preferences of younger employees who may prioritise flexibility, autonomy, and purpose, as well as the needs of older employees who may seek stability, mentorship, and professional development. Cross-generational leadership will require leaders to be adaptable, empathetic, and attuned to the varying motivations of their employees (Morgan et al., 2025). Harnessing generational diversity will require leaders to translate differences into complementary strengths rather than points of friction.

Finally, the increasing importance of agility and continuous learning will drive future leadership practices. Leaders will need to create cultures of continuous improvement, where employees are encouraged to learn, adapt, and innovate. This may involve offering personalised learning opportunities, creating flexible career paths, and fostering a growth mindset within teams. Agile leadership practices—such as decentralised decision-making, rapid iteration, and real-time feedback—will be essential for maintaining engagement in dynamic and fast-paced environments (Alexopoulos et al., 2024). Continuous learning cultures will also enable organisations to adapt faster than their competitors, converting uncertainty into opportunity.

Conclusion

The future of leadership and employee engagement will be shaped by several key trends, including the rise of digital and remote work, the increasing emphasis on diversity and inclusion, and the growing demand for purpose-driven leadership. Leaders who embrace these trends and adopt innovative, inclusive, and flexible leadership practices will be better equipped to engage their teams and drive long-term success. Theoretical frameworks such as transformational leadership, inclusive leadership, and psychological safety provide valuable insights into how leaders can foster engage-

ment in an increasingly complex and dynamic work environment (Boccoli et al., 2024; Nemphard and Edmondson, 2012).

However, the future of leadership also presents several challenges, including managing the complexity of hybrid workforces, balancing short-term performance with long-term sustainability, and measuring the impact of new leadership practices on engagement. Leaders will need to navigate these challenges by leveraging digital tools, fostering inclusive cultures, and prioritising employee well-being and development (Avery and Bergsteiner, 2011).

As organisations continue to evolve, leaders must adopt forward-looking strategies that reflect the changing nature of work and the shifting expectations of employees. By embracing digital leadership, supporting job crafting, fostering psychological safety, and integrating sustainable leadership practices, leaders can create environments where employees feel engaged, valued, and motivated to contribute to the organisation's success. As the future of work continues to unfold, leaders who prioritise engagement and adapt to emerging trends will be best positioned to lead their teams into a successful and sustainable future (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). Ultimately, leaders who embrace these future-focused capabilities will not only adapt to change but will define the next era of organisational engagement. Embedding sustainability leadership within this capability set provides a coherent pathway to durable engagement and organisational legitimacy (Zoogah and Degbey, 2025).

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