

Dual-mode e-Leadership: Styles and Responsibilities in Hybrid Virtual Teams

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Abstract

With hybrid now being the default way of working, we examine how leadership styles and responsibilities are reconfigured in hybrid virtual teams (HVTs). Drawing on interviews with 20 HVT members and leaders, our findings reveal a need for a 'dual-mode leadership' style that involves knowing when to be hands-on and when to step back given the polycentric (multi-site), polychronic (multi-tasking across time) and polymorphic (multi-role) demands of HVTs. Additionally, we unpack four leadership responsibilities that differ from those presented in earlier literature, which was based on either traditional (physically collocated) or (non-hybrid) virtual teams: (a) co-creating hybrid work practices tailored to team and individual needs; (b) promoting thoughtful technology use to spark authenticity and spontaneity; (c) fostering purposeful face-to-face (F2F) and informal in-person interactions; and (d) cultivating trust via intra-team and corporate visibility. Stemming from these responsibilities, our findings offer actionable leadership practices for effective HVTs: co-creating hybrid routines (pace and rhythm) that enhance alignment, inclusion and thus team cohesion; setting technology guidelines that reduce communication overload while improving transparency and emotional engagement; orchestrating F2F moments to restore connection, creativity and shared purpose; and fostering multi-level visibility to strengthen trust (within the team and across the organisation), reduce remote work stigma and ensure credibility and fair recognition of HVT members' contributions.

KEYWORDS

Hybrid Virtual Teams, Dual-mode e-Leadership, Virtual Teams, Leadership Styles, Leadership Responsibilities

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Bouisse-Bloigu, Isabelle, and Chamakiotis, Petros. "Dual-mode e-Leadership: Styles and Responsibilities in Hybrid Virtual Teams." *Information Systems Practice Journal*. 2026: 1:1.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the research participants in our study as well as the audience at the 21st European, Mediterranean & Middle Eastern Conference on Information Systems (EMCIS 2024) in Athens, Greece, for their feedback on an earlier version of this paper.

1. Problem statement

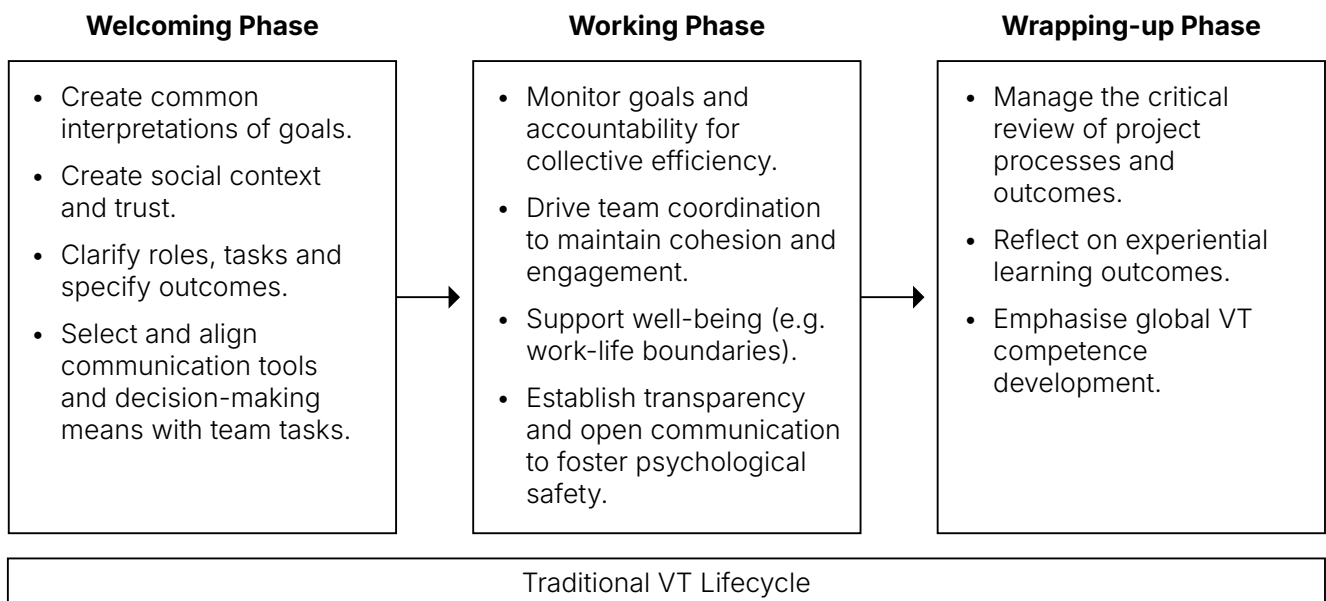
Leading teams in a hybrid work environment is still a relatively new science — and presents many types of challenges. Hybrid team leaders need to identify the best team norms around communication, refine the workplace culture to foster collaboration and community, decide on smart ways to manage accountability, and more. (MIT SMR Editors, 2025)

Hybrid work is here to stay (Wigert & Agrawal, 2023), and despite its many benefits, it challenges how contemporary teams are led (Kokshagina & Schneider, 2024; Murray, 2025). As the Editors of the *MIT Sloan Management Review* put it in the quote above, we lack research that explains how leadership is practised in the hybrid environment. We specifically focus on Hybrid Virtual Teams (HVTs), commonly defined as teams transcending in-office and remote work (e.g. Bloom et al., 2023) which differ from earlier types of (traditional or virtual) teams (e.g. Charlier et al., 2016). HVTs have different unique characteristics due to their inherent fluidity and complexity (Driskell et al., 2024). They are *polycentric*, with members operating across multiple sites (home, office, and third spaces) (Handke et al., 2024); *polychronic* (multi-tasking across time); and *polymorphic* (multi-role) (Contreras et al., 2020).

The practitioner literature highlights that the above characteristics present a mix of advantages and challenges across organisational levels (Accenture, 2021; Dale, 2024). For organisations, they generate operational optimisation, reduced real-estate costs, competitive talent attraction and retention while boosting productivity (Clemo, 2025). For team members, increased autonomy and flexibility improve work-life balance, reduce commute-related strain and enhance focused work (Peace et al., 2024). For managers, they can facilitate access to broader talent pools and support inclusion of diverse workforce segments (neurodivergent employees, parents, and carers) (Sander, 2025). However, these benefits are tempered by significant challenges: employees often face weakened ties and social isolation (Cappelli & Nehmeh, 2025), 'Zoom fatigue' (Rogelberg, 2021), increased technostress and reduced well-being (Filleri, 2023). Organisations risk suffering from fragmented and static collaboration networks, weakened organisational culture, altered psychological contracts and diminished employee loyalty (Briner, 2025; Jacobs, 2022; *The Economist*, 2025). Finally, leaders note struggling with limited oversight, uneven employee visibility and proximity bias, which complicate assessing productivity and can place remote workers at a disadvantage in terms of career progression (Berwick, 2024; McAllister, 2022).

Despite clear practitioner concerns about suitable HVT leadership (Gratton, 2023; Hill, 2023), academic research falls short of empirical evidence that explains how leadership should be practised in this environment. Our premise is that as the nature of virtual work has become more hybrid, it is important to understand how this may impact e-leadership, defined as "a social influence process mediated by [technologies] to produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behaviour, and/or performance with individuals, groups, and/or organisation" (Avolio et al., 2000, p. 617). In particular, we are interested in whether (a) knowledge from the existing literature accurately describes how leadership is practised in HVTs; (b) leadership needs to be somehow modified; or (c) completely new leadership practices may be developed in this new context. Our driving question is:

How is e-leadership practised in HVTs' unique dynamic context?



(after Zander et al., 2013; Kayworth & Leidner, 2000; Kerber & Buono, 2004; Dennis et al., 2008; Gilson et al., 2015; Gibbs et al., 2017; Contreras et al., 2020; Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Hincapie & Costa, 2024)

Figure 1. e-Leader’s responsibilities in traditional VTs

We conducted 20 interviews with HVT leaders and members which revealed (a) that a ‘dual-mode e-leadership’ style allows leaders to manoeuvre easily and dynamically between a hands-on and hands-off approach; and (b) a set of leader responsibilities which differ from those identified in earlier literature. Our study juxtaposes these findings with earlier literature (see Table 2) and explains how practitioners can benefit from our findings.

In what follows, we start by exploring existing learning from the academic literature (Section 2). We then present our empirical material (Section 3) and our research findings (Section 4). Finally, we develop practitioner takeaways that could be used by HVT practitioners (Section 5) and provide an overall reflection on the significance of our work (Section 6).

2. What can we learn from existing literature?

The focus of our review is on leadership styles and their respective responsibilities. Table 1 starts by outlining (a) three leadership styles seen primarily in physically collocated or face-to-face (F2F) team environments (transactional, transformational and situational leadership) and provides definitions, main characteristics and main outcomes of each style; and (b) four leadership styles that are found primarily in traditional (non-hybrid and typically global) virtual teams (VTs) (emergent, collaborative, shared and resonant leadership).

While the different styles outlined in Table 1 illustrate how leadership is practised in different types of teams, the traditional VT literature also explains what leaders do in the traditional VT context, which we present in Figure 1.

	Leadership Style	Definition / Main Characteristics	Main Outcomes	Key References
F2F Teams	Transactional Leadership	Exchange-oriented style based on contingent rewards and corrective actions; task-focused and authoritative, emphasising clear expectations and performance monitoring.	Achieves short-term goals and performance stability; maintains order and compliance but limits empowerment, intrinsic motivation and creativity, especially in virtual contexts.	(Avolio et al., 1999; Bass et al., 2003)
	Transformational Leadership	Inspires and empowers team members through vision, motivation and individualised consideration.	Fosters psychological empowerment, engagement and sense of proximity.	(Greimel et al., 2023; Hoyt & Blascovich, 2003)
	Situational Leadership	Adapts leadership style to team members' competence, confidence and readiness; requires flexibility and continuous assessment.	Improves responsiveness, alignment and follower development through tailored support.	(Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Gibson et al., 2002; Lee-Kelley, 2002; Farmer, 2005)
Traditional (non-hybrid) VTs	Emergent Leadership	Leadership arises informally based on initiative and context rather than hierarchy. Shared influence among members.	Increases agility, adaptability and ownership in dynamic virtual settings.	(Charlier et al., 2016)
	Co-Leadership	Two or more leaders share authority simultaneously, leveraging complementary expertise.	Strengthens collaboration, decision quality and accountability.	(Chamakiotis & Panteli, 2017)
	Shared Leadership	Leadership is distributed or rotated among members across project phases or tasks.	Promotes collective responsibility, creativity and adaptability in dispersed teams.	(Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Bunjak et al., 2022; Jo, 2025)

Table 1. Leadership styles in F2F teams and in traditional VTs

Consequently, while existing literature clearly identifies e-leadership responsibilities at each different phase of VTs lifecycle, there continues to be a knowledge gap as to how the idiosyncratic context of HVTs might influence how leadership is practised, which we seek to address with our own empirical material presented next.

3. Empirical material

We conducted semi-structured interviews with HVT professionals from companies in the areas of human resources (HR), finance, purchasing, marketing and e-commerce, with at least two years of professional experience, including team leaders and non-leaders. Participants, aged 25 to 63 (mean

age: 43), were contacted via LinkedIn or email and included 11 females and 9 males, 70% of whom were married with children, with an average of 16 years of professional experience and 8 years of tenure in their current companies. Participants came from a variety of functions and roles from different industries as summarised in Appendix A. In this paper, we concentrate on the leadership practices that participants identified as particularly effective in the HVT context.

Our participants gave information regarding the HVT configurations they experienced, including the number of in-office/remote days and their level of involvement in choosing and deciding on hybrid work arrangements. We conducted 20 semi-structured interviews between December 2023 and May 2024. Our interview guide covered participants' professional backgrounds, current hybrid work arrangements and their impact on team dynamics and leadership. Most interviews lasted for two hours each and were conducted in French or English, mostly online. Per institutional ethical approval, we ensured voluntary participation and informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. Interviews were transcribed using NoScribe and subsequently analysed using NVivo.

Our research was driven by the inductive interpretive method and employed a coding strategy influenced by Glaser and Strauss's (2017) open and axial coding, enabling iteration and the emergence of themes based on our participants' experiences. This approach prioritises the voices and experiences of participants, offering a rich, context-specific view of how hybrid work affects e-leadership and team dynamics. To organise our analysis, we used the Gioia method (Gioia et al., 2013) for two reasons: (a) it is increasingly seen as a trustworthy and transparent way of analysing qualitative data (Gehman et al., 2018); and (b) it allows for the initially coded data (1st-order concepts) to be then grouped in larger themes (2nd-order themes) typically influenced by existing literature. In our case, this process resulted in identifying 26 1st-order concepts, six 2nd-order themes, and two aggregate dimensions (see our data structure in Appendix B).

4. Research findings

Our findings are organised in two thematic sections: leadership styles and responsibilities.

4.1 The dual-mode e-leadership style

The e-leaders in our study were expected to show flexibility and dynamically adapt to a constantly changing environment created by the hybridity of the teams that operated under different working conditions, preferences and roles. Being a dual-mode e-leader meant moving on a spectrum between being formal and flexible. The first example in this category is from Olivia, an e-leader whose philosophy was about balancing structured oversight with sensitivity to avoid appearing overly controlling and micromanaging or, on the contrary, too distant, especially when working remotely:

I didn't want my team to feel scrutinised [during remote workdays] ... So, I was giving [very few calls]. I kept my distance. But it was my perception. On the contrary, they felt more support when I started to follow-up [more closely] and to call them more often ... I had to learn to adapt my management style according to people's perceptions and needs [and not only my own].

Moving in the opposite direction, Julien, another leader in our study, had to shift into a more formalised leadership style to compensate for the lack of spontaneous, non-verbal cues, which, although naturally present in an office environment, were completely absent on remote days:

I had to do more [official] team meetings, every 2 weeks, to be more number-oriented, to focus more on the strategy, [that is to say] to be more formal [more factual], to improvise less and be less spontaneous.

Such a hands-on approach was required in order to deal with the cultural diversity of some HVTs. As Sylvie noted in the extract below, her Taiwanese team required a more prescriptive leadership approach as working from home, an embedded characteristic of HVTs, was not seen as 'real work':

[In Taiwan], putting aside the fact that people live in smaller apartments [than in Malaysia], the [corporate] culture is still quite traditional. They need the boss to be there and to tell them what to do [step by step]. So, they do not understand how working from home could be as professional as working from the office. I believe that some regional cultures are not mature enough to implement hybrid working arrangements.

Moreover, Lea adopted a more empathetic leadership because she could not see each team member every day:

You are really developing more empathic and caring management in hybrid work settings. Because you see [your team members] less often, you have to take better care of them than if you know you will see them again the next day.

The quotes above reveal that adaptability is a core characteristic of an effective e-leader in HVTs, enabling manoeuvring between a highly structured, formal approach and an empathetic or flexible, hands-off one in different situations. We call this collection of styles and the dynamic moving between them the dual-mode style and, in what follows, we explain that it is a valuable response to ensuring a healthy balance between the affordances of the hybrid environment and the personal needs and the cultural/organisational contexts of the team members.

As Julien's quote above shows, the unique characteristics of HVTs play an important role in influencing leadership styles. In that case, the lack of visibility observed in Julien's team rendered it necessary to have a more hands-on role in ensuring that corporate objectives are met and that self-discipline-related challenges that some members may face do not harm their productivity. Guy also shared his experience around self-discipline and reduced well-being:

For some employees, we have noticed that they have difficulty managing telework. Because they cannot necessarily disconnect, or, on the contrary, they will take advantage of making some personal stuff (one laundry here and there, a longer lunch or coffee break). Some are more effective and, clearly, we would see [the ones] that have a harder time getting results.

While the above may explain why the more hands-on approach of the dual-mode leader is necessary, the data of our study suggest that a softer, more hands-off approach could serve to support and enhance inclusivity in the HVT environment. Leaders were found to tailor their approach based on a broad range of individual needs and working preferences, such as commuting constraints, family obligations and working preferences:

We have one of our experts, [for whom social interactions are more [complex] but who is very good technically ... So, we don't impose [any in-office days], he does a great job, and it works well ... We adapt too. We adapt a lot to the person as such. (Robert)

Another participant found that adapting hybrid work arrangements, e.g. granting more remote days to introverted or neurodiverse individuals, helped them to perform better:

There are people that are very shy and introverted, with almost autistic orientations. It costs them to exchange with others. Because they have fewer days to deal with it, they succeed to do it better when they have to. And you feel it in the evening of an in-office day, you feel that they are relieved because tomorrow they are teleworking ... And you feel that [too] when you call them on telework days, they are much more relaxed. (Sylvie)

So far, we have seen that the dual-mode e-leader is expected to move dynamically between two different styles (hands-on vs. hands-off) in order to ensure a healthy balance between the affordances of the hybrid nature of HVTs (combining office with home working) and the personal and cultural characteristics of the team members. Next, we move on to present the specific leadership responsibilities that emerged in our analysis.

4.2 Dual-mode e-leaders' responsibilities

Our analysis identified four areas of responsibility for HVT leaders, which we present below.

4.2.1 Co-creating hybrid work practices

The first area of leadership responsibility we identified was about developing member-specific hybrid work practices instead of a blanket policy. This could be done according to (a) job function; (b) HVT temporality and lifecycle; and (c) corporate maturity and hierarchical seniority. Although the possibility of hybrid work may relate to an organisational policy that applies to all, our leaders were found to be responsible for ensuring that one's hybrid working approach does not stand in the team's way. In fact, we found that it was important for leaders to ensure that their team members' hybrid working was coordinated in a way that meets the organisational objectives. This oftentimes meant modifying the remote and in-office number of days, locations and eligibility for hybrid work based on their team's operational needs. For instance, those in HR, such as Béatrice and Olivia, emphasised frequent on-site availability for immediate interactions. Meanwhile, those in logistics and supply chain, such as Sylvie and Rachel, coordinated in-office schedules around shipment peaks to maintain uninterrupted workflow. As a participant from a business consultancy highlighted,

There are plenty of jobs for which it makes absolutely no sense to articulate hybrid work simply as 2 remote days per week. In my opinion, companies will adopt policies that will be a little looser in the long term to leave room for differentiated organisation of work. It is to shift the unit of time [number of remote days], whether monthly or annually. (Laurent)

Further to operational needs, the temporality and lifecycle of the HVT seemed to play a role too. As our leaders shared, during the onboarding phase, several participants implemented phased approaches, whereby new employees began with more in-office days to familiarise themselves with organisational culture, establish networks, understand workflows and master technical and operational tasks that were challenging to convey remotely:

During the first 6 months [of a new hire], we limit it to one remote day, precisely to get to know each other and the proper communication channels ... We think that after 6 months, you are really

integrated into the team, so it will be much easier to call or ask for something. [Moreover], it [also] takes 6 months to really understand how we operate. We are a huge technical department. ... You must be there ... to see the guys in the field and go to the factory ... You can't do it by being 2 days teleworking and knowing that one day in-office is often [packed] with meetings. (Veronica)

Later in the HVT lifecycle, participants emphasised the importance of monitoring and adjusting remote schedules to address emerging challenges. For example, Laurent noted that latent conflicts, which are more difficult to detect and resolve remotely, could surface during later stages.

You have a second phase [where] there is an ease of operational processes that is often quite misleading because it gives the feeling that problems have been solved. But [during that phase], we begin to see problems that will go beyond the simple trick of distributing tasks or defining tools to productivity gains ... When conflicts appear, they are latent ones. It is much harder to defuse them simply because many more hypotheses are made about the behaviour of others when we are remote than when we are in person.

In the above cases, leaders were expected to ensure that hybrid practices are applied in ways that can allow members to get to know one another well early on in the HVT lifecycle, while maintaining a certain degree of hybridity for the remainder of the lifecycle in order to ensure that potential conflicts that are hard to detect virtually are identified and resolved quickly.

Our participants explained that employees with limited corporate maturity, e.g. shorter tenures or limited familiarity with organisational structures, benefited from increased in-office time to build informal networks and understand the organisation's inner workings. Without adequate F2F interactions, they could become isolated, demotivated and potentially lack crucial access to professional growth opportunities. In contrast, employees with extended corporate maturity, e.g. with established networks and a strong grasp of organisational workflows, could often enjoy greater flexibility to work remotely while remaining equally productive:

In our company, you need to know whom to contact and to network with ... I believe it takes a minimum of several years in the company to be able to do hybrid work successfully. (Fabrice)

For a junior person, it is impossible to be motivated ... If you only come once a week in the office, you don't know your colleagues. You don't even know your manager! (Sophie)

Regarding hierarchical seniority, our participants explained that those with significant hierarchical responsibilities, including themselves, often had to maintain a higher in-office presence to manage cross-departmental collaboration, align on strategic goals and facilitate timely critical decision-making:

I was N-2 to the CEO [i.e. only two hierarchical levels away from the CEO]. So, I obviously had the pressure to be there more often because I need to meet with the CEO and all the executive directors ... Among senior managers and board members, even if we were teleworking, we would frequently come back to the office to meet in person to address key issues and advance on specific projects. (Béatrice)

The above extracts demonstrate that indeed, corporate maturity and hierarchical seniority significantly influence the degree of hybridity that different participants could experience, and there was consensus in our dataset that leaders should consider this when developing member-specific hybrid practices.

4.2.2 Promoting thoughtful ICT use

The second area of responsibility we identified was about developing an ethos of ICT use for spontaneity and sincerity. Across our dataset, there was abundant evidence around the problems that inadequate ICT use (such as using a single ICT for everything) may lead to. Consequently, leaders developed practices of ICT use that could mitigate the adverse effects of virtual working while capitalising on the benefits of the F2F work embedded in HVTs. For example, Bertrand shared how asynchronous ICTs enhanced transparency and accountability by ensuring team members had access to timely updates on project progress, addressing the challenge of limited in-office exchanges and oversight:

Before such [detailed] information could be easily exchanged in our open space [office]. With hybrid work ... I wanted to implement this asynchronous practice to write ... and share updates for each project, even every action ... to steer and monitor our activity, it is important that everyone [promptly] knows the project's progress.

More importantly, however, the participants in our study highlighted the importance of spontaneity that some ICTs may offer. Béatrice, for instance, explained how ICTs like WhatsApp allowed her team to resolve issues much more quickly than would have been possible with traditional work-related ICTs like email:

Our work is very fast-paced: if I'm in the office and the person is there, I just walk in and [talk]. To get that agility ... to mirror it ... we have WhatsApp groups and ... different subgroups ... For us, WhatsApp [is] the medium of fast contact and [our] way to get many things done while not being able to see each other.

More than a simply more efficient way of addressing work-related issues, digital spontaneity also extended to personal touches, such as voice messages or brief instant chat messages to convey the e-leader's empathy and support with the purpose of enhancing the team's morale and well-being:

In the morning, it is the little Slack message to say: 'Hi, have a good day, good luck [with this project]'. It is the personal touch, the empathy, that needs to be conveyed. To show support and that you are available without being too invasive. To say, 'I am available at this time or at this moment to support you, when do you need me?' And to also anticipate potential [well-being] issues. (Guy)

In fact, spontaneity emerged as an interesting finding in our analysis, highlighting this very need for human connection that may be compromised in the HVT environment. ICTs allowing video calls provided a medium for emotional connectivity and authenticity. Although sometimes unconsciously, several e-leaders prioritised video calls, which transmit non-verbal cues, to give a sincere personal dimension to digital interactions without hiding in virtual or blurred backgrounds:

I regularly turn my camera on for my one-to-one calls to get this more personal side. I find it interesting to be able to see emotions ... I also tend not to blur my background and try to pass it on to my team members ... I believe that a real background conveys that personal side, that trust factor. We have a normal life; it is not just professional. We are a whole. For me, it is a token of sincerity, in a way, ... that facilitates interactions. (Guy)

Inevitably, not being able to communicate F2F on a regular basis, HVT members found it useful to develop an ethos of ICT use that goes beyond the mere exchange of information and completion of

work-related tasks to use the affordances of contemporary ICTs, not always work-related ones, that allowed them to 'mimic' the spontaneity and sincere visibility that typically characterises the F2F environment.

4.2.3 Fostering purposeful F2F and informal interactions

The third area is based on a widespread perception among many HVT members that, in the HVT context, their interactions may become too task-oriented and individualistic, eroding the emotional connection with colleagues. To accommodate this, leaders were tasked with an often unsaid 'initiative' to organise purposeful F2F interactions to foster relational connection and reinforce commitment to the organisation proactively. Lisa below noted that, in the HVT context, F2F gatherings spurred an unprecedented 'euphoria', creating a positive energy that enhanced problem-solving and conflict resolution:

The days when everybody is in the office, there is an excitement that wasn't there when everybody was in the office. It was just the daily routine ... Now, we don't meet each other very often, only once a week. So, suddenly, everyone is really happy to see each other ... I think there are solutions that come out on those days because there is euphoria in them ... Susceptibilities are a little swept away by this euphoria of seeing each other. It helps. It gives you a boost.

There is widespread evidence in our data, by both leaders and members, that in the HVT environment, the leader should capitalise on the affordance of F2F work for specific tasks, such as project meetings, brainstorming sessions and decision-making committees, as they enabled more explicit message delivery, generated real-time creative interactions and facilitated simultaneous side discussions that are often diluted or missed in hybrid meetings mixing remote and in-office participants. In addition to the above task-related benefits, purposeful F2F interactions were found beneficial for enhancing team morale and maintaining social connection, especially for the members whose inclusivity could have been otherwise undermined:

It works if, during the in-office days, you have increased moments with people that are physically there and share common things. For example, team activities, meeting with other departments or visiting our warehouse ... or celebrating successes. ... You create events to live things together. So, this relationship you no longer have every day ... continues to exist. Besides, [team members] are reassured by seeing that [even if they are] not in the office, they don't have to worry because I [their manager] will share and involve them. (Rachel)

4.2.4 Cultivating trust via intra-team and corporate visibility

The fourth and final area of leadership responsibility was about cultivating a special type of trust that could promote intra-team and corporate visibility. Indeed, trust in HVTs goes beyond confidence in the reliability and integrity of teammates, to perceptions of 'whether others are really working' when remote:

There is this company culture that may be quite typical for public administration: if you are not behind your desk, you are not really working. (Katia)

Inevitably, this comes down to (reduced) visibility. To address this, the leaders we interviewed used specific digital tools and regular updates to make work progress transparent, ensuring that team members saw and recognised each other's contributions despite not sharing a physical workspace.

This intra-team visibility not only supported accountability but also reinforced collaborative efforts by clarifying each team member's role and impact within the team.

While the above actions were found to improve intra-team visibility and promote trust at the team level, there was also agreement among our participants about the importance of being visible to senior management; something that the hybrid context does not always work in favour of:

One of the challenges of hybrid work set-up is for the team to be more visible. My team meetings with the entire top management team [are mixed in-office and remote participation], and if my team members are not there, it's a bit of a shame. I encourage them to be on-site. Being on-site, we can promote the team a bit more in the eyes of the top management. (Bertrand)

Consequently, the leaders we spoke to emphasise the need to counteract potential remote work stigma, where absence from the office can be mistaken for disengagement, but also enhance their teams' credibility and reputation. Overall, these findings point to the importance of taking actions that can enable trust at both the team and organisational levels.

5. Practitioner takeaways

Our analysis has led to two main takeaways around the how and the what of e-leadership in the HVT context depicted in our proposed model (Figure 2) which outlines: (a) a unique leadership style which we call 'dual-mode' that allows team leaders to tailor and switch their management approach in a dynamic fashion due to HVTs' specific characteristics; and (b) a set of unique responsibilities that leaders undertake within the HVT context.

Our first takeaway is about e-leadership styles that work well in HVTs. While we know that in VTs, leadership is often shared and emergent, due to the VTs' unique characteristics (e.g. Charlier et al., 2016), HVTs' fluidity (Driskell et al., 2024), polycentric (multiple locations) (Handke et al., 2024), polychronic (multi-tasking across time) and polymorphic (multi-role) nature (Contreras et al., 2020)

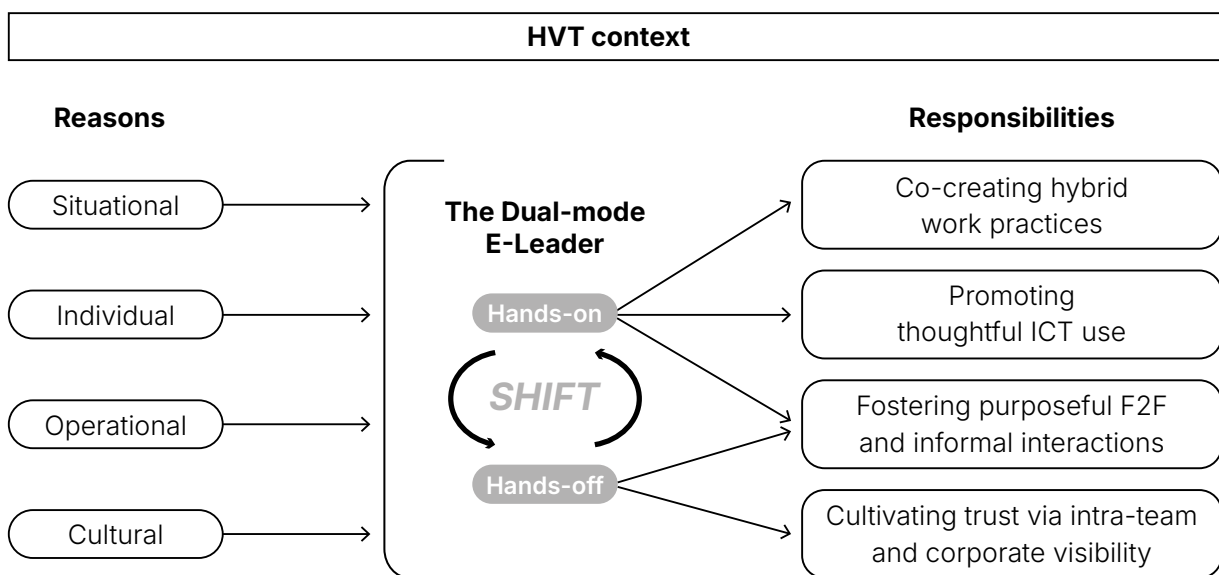


Figure 2. The dual-mode e-leader: reasons and responsibilities

require us to reimagine the job of the e-leader. With our study, we extend the literature on e-leadership through the elicitation of the dual-mode e-leadership style; a style which was found to flexibly respond to some of the unique characteristics of HVTs involving operational, cultural and personal challenges (e.g. Chamakiotis et al., 2021).

Our analysis suggests that the HVT environment necessitates a leadership style capable of shifting between hands-on and hands-off approaches based on situational needs. For instance, some of our examples above show how e-leaders adjust approaches based on cultural preferences, such as prescriptive methods in less hybrid-accustomed cultural contexts or based on individual needs like supporting neurodiverse employees with greater flexibility. Dual-mode e-leadership also balances inclusivity and productivity by shifting between a hands-on approach (for goal alignment and remote work self-discipline challenges) and a hands-off approach (to support autonomy and diverse working preferences while maintaining team cohesion). This situational fluidity of the dual-mode e-leadership style positions adaptability at the core of effective leadership in today's HVTs. It further advances existing understandings of e-leadership by showing that e-leadership in HVTs is not static, like some of the traditional styles are portrayed. Unlike traditional leadership styles which focus on adjusting leadership style mostly based on individual tasks and competences, our dual-mode view of e-leadership involves dynamically shifting styles in a tailored manner over time (i.e. throughout the HVT lifecycle) and at multiple levels simultaneously, individual, team and organisational. Consequently, dual-mode e-leadership constitutes an important update of existing frameworks by emphasising fluidity, situational responsiveness and the dynamic character of e-leadership in HVTs.

Our second takeaway is about e-leaders' responsibilities in HVTs. Early literature in this area emphasised the e-leader's role in, for example, building trust (e.g. Coglisier et al., 2012), improving performance (e.g. Carson et al., 2007) and developing dispersed members' commitment (e.g. Kerber & Buono, 2004). Additionally, a dominant view in earlier literature is that e-leadership responsibilities differ between different phases of the VT lifecycle (see Figure 1). In the HVT context, on the other hand, e-leaders might face additional responsibilities, such as attending to both collocated and remote members simultaneously (Hincapie & Costa, 2024) and monitoring team members' well-being (e.g. Chamakiotis et al., 2021). With our work, we build on these conceptual studies and identify four empirically responsibilities of the HVT e-leader which can be used to provide more detailed practitioner guidance. Our analysis suggests that e-leaders in HVTs adapt their leadership styles based on situational, individual, operational and cultural reasons. This adaptative approach challenges traditional linear VT lifecycle models, such as Zander et al.'s (2013) 'welcoming – working – wrapping' three-phase lifecycle model. Our findings reveal that the responsibilities of the HVT e-leader were not associated with distinct phases of team lifecycle but rather occurred in an ongoing manner. In Table 2, we compare how the four responsibilities we identified (presented also in Figure 2) differ or complement the conventional view of the leader's responsibilities in F2F teams and in traditional (G)VTs, and we detail the outcomes that those specific HVT leader's responsibilities can produce.

Leaders' Area of Responsibility ¹	In F2F teams	In Traditional (G)VTs	In HVTs — Our View
Work Practices and Policies	Leaders coordinate work largely through direct supervision and informal adjustment; limited need to formalise roles and processes. They use rich in-person interaction to provide intellectual stimulation and coaching.	VT leaders manage dispersed teams using linear VT lifecycle models (e.g. welcoming–working–wrapping up), assuming uniformity in team member needs and virtual engagement.	<p>Description: HVT leaders co-create hybrid practices by adapting rhythm, and on-site presence to job functions, team phasing, team members' corporate maturity and hierarchical seniority.</p> <p>Expected outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-creation of working environment (pace and rhythm) by leaders and team members characterised by flexibility and empathy • Stronger alignment between individual needs and organisational goals • Improved inclusion, motivation and performance across diverse roles • Sustained long-term cohesion and performance
ICT Use	Leaders use technology as a supplement; primary communication and coordination occur F2F, so leaders rarely manage media choice explicitly.	VT leaders should match digital tools to efficiency and synchronicity (e.g. matching task and medium to ensure effective communication).	<p>Description: HVT leaders should set clear ICT guidelines and processes to balance structure and spontaneity, leveraging asynchronous tools (e.g. email) for transparency and accountability and synchronous tools (WhatsApp and video calls) for authentic, unprompted personal interactions.</p> <p>Expected Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved team communication and emotional engagement • Increased authenticity and spontaneity in interactions • Reduced technostress and communication overload • Enhanced group intelligence and facilitated information sharing and integration, thus improving HVTs' performance

(continued next page)

¹ Here we speak about 'areas of responsibility' (which are similar between F2F teams, traditional [G]VTs and HVTs) instead of specific responsibilities as the latter were found to differ in HVTs.

Leaders' Area of Responsibility ¹	In F2F teams	In Traditional (G)VTs	In HVTs — Our View
Connection & Commitment	Leaders build cohesion and identification through spontaneous corridor talk, shared physical context and nonverbal cues. They use in-person meetings/rituals to reinforce team identity and commitment.	VT leaders foster connection and commitment mainly through synchronous digital tools and occasional informal exchanges for complex tasks and for brainstorming; F2F contact is seen as rare or optional.	<p>Description: HVT leaders proactively foster purposeful and informal F2F gatherings for success recognition, team celebrations and sharing team's vision. F2F meetings are seen as necessary.</p> <p>Expected outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restored emotional and personal connections • Reduced individualistic behaviours and fostered stronger collaboration • Increased creativity and inclusivity, especially for remote members • Enhanced team morale and collective commitment • Greater sense of belonging and shared purpose
Trust	Leaders rely on co-presence and frequent informal contact for trust to emerge 'naturally'; fewer explicit trust-building routines are required.	VT leaders build trust based on performance reliability, competence and consistent communication among members who may never meet in person.	<p>Description: HVT leaders cultivate trust through intra-team and corporate visibility.</p> <p>Intra-team: They can enhance transparency of contributions within the team through digital tools and structured updates.</p> <p>Corporate: They can intentionally orchestrate corporate visibility by creating in-person engagements with key stakeholders (e.g. bringing remote workers on-site to participate actively in meetings with senior management (even for meetings mixing in-person and remote participation)).</p> <p>Expected outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforced intra-team trust and collaboration through accountability transparency • Increased legitimacy of remote work and equitable recognition of hybrid contributions • Broader perception of fairness and engagement • Reduced remote work stigma and enhanced team credibility with the organisation

Table 2. Leaders' responsibilities in F2F teams, traditional (G)VTs and HVTs

6. Reflection

We conducted this research with the purpose of providing an updated understanding of e-leadership in HVTs given widespread academic and practitioner recognition that leadership may play out differently in HVTs than F2F teams and earlier types of VTs. Consequently, our qualitative analysis offers fresh, detailed, empirically driven insights that explain the how (styles) and the what (responsibilities) of e-leadership in the HVT context. We have framed these as takeaways and hope that they can guide practitioners at different levels (including leaders and also members) as hybrid work continues to evolve. In closing, our findings can also be used by researchers who wish to expand research in this area to promote new theoretical understandings.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Research Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Work experience (years)	Tenure in current company (years)	Managerial role*	Job function	Company size (number of employees)	Industry	Current location
Sandrine	Female	20+	8	TC/PM	Teaching and Research	201-500	Academia	France
Sylvie	Female	20+	7	D	Sales and Business Development	+10,000	Logistics / Freight Forwarding	Taiwan
Julien	Male	20+	13	D	Buying and Production	1,001-5,000	Retail / Direct-to-consumer	France
Philippe	Male	3	1	TC/PM	Consultant	5,001-10,000	Audit	France
Fabrice	Male	20+	10	TC/PM	Finance	1,001-5,000	Public Transport	France
Camille	Female	10+	2	M	Sales and Business Development	11-50	E-commerce	France
Béatrice	Female	20+	8	D	Human Resources	501-1,000	Energy	UAE
Veronica	Female	20+	5	D	Transport and Services	1,001-5,000	Government Administration	France
Katia	Female	20+	16	M	Research and Business Intelligence	1,001-5,000	Government Administration	France
Laurent	Male	20+	12	D	Business Partner	501-1000	Business Consulting	France
Lisa	Female	20+	4	TC/PM	Finance / Internal Audit	5,001-10,000	Retail Furniture	France
Rachel	Female	10+	7	M	Supply Chain Management	+10,000	Personal Care Product Manufacturing	France
Lea	Female	10+	8	M	E-commerce	1,001-5,000	Publishing	France
Robert	Male	10+	8	M	Transformation and Data Management	+10,000	Insurance	France
Guy	Male	20+	4	D	Sales and Business Development	11-50	IT Services and Consulting	France
Bertrand	Male	10+	7	M	IT	+10,000	Aerospace Manufacturing	France
Antoine	Male	20+	16	TC/PM	Customer Service	1001-5000	Travel Services	France
Raymond	Male	20+	2	TC/PM	Developer / IT Technical Expert	501-1,000	Software Development	France
Sophie	Female	20+	19	M	Project Management	501-1,000	Law Practice	France
Olivia	Female	10+	3	D	Support Services (HR / Finance / Accounting / Purchasing)	5,001-10,000	Government Administration	France

* D=Director / M=Manager / TC/PM=Team Contributor or Project Manager

Note: All names used in this document are pseudonyms.

Appendix B: Data structure



Bios

Isabelle Bouisse-Bloigu is a Global Executive PhD Candidate at ESCP Business School (Paris Campus). With a Master's degree in Management and International Business from EDHEC, she has 18 years of professional experience in China and 22 years in the Fashion, Luxury, Retail, Beauty and Lifestyle sectors. This includes 10 years in Supply Chain, where she served as Purchasing Director for a French fashion brand in China, and 12 years in Human Resources as Talent Acquisition Director for an executive search consulting firm and as Senior Career Development consultant. As a lecturer and guest professor for over 10 years, she has been teaching at higher education institutions in France and China (including ESCP and ESSCA). Her research explores technology-mediated environments, inter-cultural management, organizational behaviour and human resources. Her academic work has been presented at international conferences, including the Academy of Management (AOM) Annual Meeting, the UK Association for Information Systems (UKAIS) Annual Conference and the Mediterranean Conference on Information Systems (MCIS).

Petros Chamakiotis is Professor of Technology Management in the Department of Management at ESCP Business School, where he is also the European Faculty Advisory Committee (EFAC) Representative for the Madrid Campus, and the Scientific Director of the MSc in Digital Project Management & Consulting. Petros has conducted numerous projects on virtual/hybrid teamwork with an emphasis on issues of creativity, leadership and onboarding. He is also interested in the wider individual and societal implications of digital technologies, such as their influence on individuals' (work–life) boundary management, and their ability to create social value in developing countries and in the context of forced migration. His research has appeared in relevant journals, such as *Information Systems Journal*; *Human Relations*; *New Technology, Work and Employment*; *Organizational Dynamics*; *Information Technology for Development*; *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*; and *International Journal of Information Management*; as well as in international media and non-academic outlets, including *LSE Business Review*; *Daily Mail*; *World Economic Forum*; *The European Business Review*; *El Mundo*; and *Expansión*.