

Redefining the Meaning of Trust in the New Hybrid World of Work

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Abstract

The term "augmented workforce" has emerged in recent years due to the widespread use of robotics, artificial intelligence, the gig economy, and crowdsourcing technologies. The widespread use of information and communication technologies and business virtualisation have brought trust to the forefront of management concerns. At its most basic, the managerial conundrum boils down to a single question: how can one manage people they cannot physically observe? The laws of trust are apparent and well established; however, they contradict a managerial tradition that holds that efficiency and control are inextricably linked and that you cannot have much of one without a significant amount of the other. This paper examines the use of trust in the new hybrid workplace. The relationship between the individual and the organisation is being assessed considering recent digital trends. The article contends that there is a need to redefine trust in the hybrid work environment. This article further identified difficulties linked to this transition, such as decreased trust based on physical presence and increased concerns over fairness and transparency. The findings show the possibilities offered by a new work of work paradigm, such as establishing trust through measurable outcomes, transparent communication, and reciprocal respect.

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1. Introduction

"Successfully working from home is a skill, just like programming, designing or writing. It takes time and commitment to develop that skill, and the traditional office culture doesn't give us any reason to do that."

Alex Turnbull - Founder and CEO of Groove

Since its establishment in the mid-1960s, trust has continuously been perceived as essential to efficient work settings, enabling collaboration, transparency, and shared objectives. Trust, as defined by Dirks and De Jongh (2022), is primarily a psychological condition specific to work relationships among individuals or groups in organisational contexts. Hence, trust is crucial as the future prosperity of any company relies on optimal employee-employer engagement (Deloitte, 2018).

Trust is of great relevance in the global business environment marked by fast development and intercommunication. Still, the concept of trust is somewhat sensitive. Several factors might contribute to the phenomena, including the digitisation of physical offices, the growing volatility of world markets, and the development of hybrid working models. These elements can affect a company's continuous performance and long-term survival (Bijlsma-Frankema & Costa, 2022; Kramer, 2020). Restoring confidence and healing damaged relationships inside a company depends on active sense-making.

According to Schluter, Génereux, Landaverde, and Schluter (2023), the advent of the Covid-19 epidemic has greatly disturbed conventional concepts of trust by further driving the use of virtual arrangements. The hybrid work paradigm questioned the concept that physical proximity is a vital factor in establishing trust in the workplace. In contrast, employees allocate their time between physical and remote sites, fundamentally altering workplace trust dynamics (Johansson & Lundström, 2023). Moreover, Spurk and Straub (2020) underscore that interpersonal trust in hybrid work settings is more intricate because of the physical distance and fewer personal interactions. Therefore, trust extends beyond conventional hierarchical systems to encompass virtual interpersonal transactions, communication channels, and cooperation (Golden et al., 2020).

The process of adapting to remote work is also impacted by other crucial elements, such as the level of employment independence, the explicitness of job requirements, the level of trust between individuals, the degree of social isolation, and the dynamics of communication (Zoonen et al., 2021).

The Global Human Capital Trends Report (2024) underscores the significance of human capital strategies in fostering trust and cultivating a feeling of inclusion in a hybrid work environment. Human capital investment is crucial since its adaptability and agility will define the future boundaryless workplace (PwC, 2024).

Thus, the transition to a hybrid work environment after the Covid pandemic stimulates research interest in establishing and maintaining trust in the emerging work environment (Fischer, 2023). Investigating trust in the hybrid workplace is essential for achieving positive individual and organisational results. According to The Edelman Trust Barometer (2022), organisations that actively embrace trust have higher adaptability to change, engage in more innovation, and have lower turnover intentions. Empirical research indicates that organisations allocating resources towards trust-building activities observe elevated employee satisfaction and team productivity (McKinsey & Company, 2023).

This article examines the redefinition of trust in the hybrid work environment following the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing from an extensive analysis of existing literature, this paper highlights areas for improvement in the present research, namely the necessity for a unified framework to comprehend trust in hybrid work settings. This paper concludes with a framework depicting the components required to enable trust and meaning-making in a hybrid work ecosystem.

2. Methods

The present study utilises a qualitative research strategy, namely using a conceptual analysis technique (Creswell, 2018). This study aims to investigate, define, and suggest a theoretical framework for comprehending trust in the hybrid work environment. This methodology is appropriate for developing novel ideas and frameworks by combining pertinent literature and theoretical perspectives. The study employed academic resources including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSCO. To filter keywords such as "trust in the workplace," "hybrid work model," "remote work," "output-based trust," and "communication-based trust," Boolean operators are highly effective. Priority was given to the following criteria: peer-reviewed academic papers, books written by renowned specialists in organisational behaviour, and reliable reports from accredited research institutions. The publication dates were limited to the past ten years to ensure access to the latest research in the field. A comprehensive evaluation was conducted on the selected sources to determine their strengths and weaknesses. When appraising the quality of the evidence, the author considered elements such as the research design, sample size, data processing techniques, and any biases. An in-

depth understanding of the challenges and benefits of the hybrid work paradigm in building trust within companies was developed using the material from the literature study.

3. Literature Review

3.1 The nature of a hybrid work environment

Although the hybrid work environment has existed since the 1960s, the theoretical underpinnings, coining, and practical application thereof in the workplace have been an issue for continuous debate (Shaw, 2023). Vartiainen and Vanharanta (2023, p. iii) performed extensive meta-analyses to coin the concept of a hybrid work environment. According to these authors, hybrid work can be defined as: *“any type of work arrangement where a worker operates in a sustainable manner alone or with others, as agreed upon between the worker and organisation, based on the latter’s purpose, the former’s needs and tasks, and the context, with flexibility regarding the time and place of the work – on the employer’s premises or default location or remotely at home, other locations or on the road – using digital technologies such as laptops, mobile phones and the internet.”*

This definition emphasises sustainability, agreement between two parties, alignment between purpose and tasks, flexibility, location and digitalisation. Establishing trust in the hybrid work environment necessitates acknowledging and honouring the indistinct borders, cultivating empathy, and establishing a work atmosphere that is helpful and inclusive, where employees feel esteemed, listened to, and acknowledged (Rudnick, & Greco, 2023).

The COVID-19 epidemic in 2020 greatly expedited the use of hybrid work processes. Following the implementation of worldwide lockdowns and social distancing protocols, organisations were compelled to shift to remote work swiftly. Amidst the ongoing epidemic, organisations started to acknowledge the possible enduring advantages of a hybrid organisation structure, enabling workers to work from both remote and in-office locations, so achieving a harmonious blend of flexibility and collaboration (Gartner, 2021; Barrero, Bloom, & Davis, 2021).

3.2 Evolution of the concept of trust in the workplace

Trust and its implementation in the workplace continue to be a subject of substantial controversy. Castaldo, Premazzi, and Zerbini (2010) indicated that more is known about the outcomes of trust than the true nature thereof. Trust in the workplace is commonly described as a psychological condition characterised by the conscious decision to embrace vulnerability, driven by optimistic expectations about the intentions or actions of another individual (Rousseau et al., 1998). Trust, therefore, is

complex and multi-faceted and includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioural aspects (Colquitt et al., 2007).

Dirks and Ferrin (2002) mention that trust in the traditional organisation was established through hierarchical arrangements and based on employees' faith in their supervisors to provide authority, tenure, and consistency. The emergence of flatter organizational structures and the gig economy has caused a shift in the foundation of trust toward competence, dependability, and interpersonal interactions (Wang & Sacks, 2021). Flatter organisational structures typically grant employees increased autonomy, therefore fostering trust by demonstrating the organisation's faith in their skills and judgement (Edmondson, 1999). This empowerment process has the potential to result in a more actively involved and committed workforce since employees perceive themselves as being trusted and appreciated. Consequently, this promotes mutual trust toward management (Brenkert, 1998).

The inherent characteristics of the gig economy also impact the level of trust among gig workers. Gig employment is characterised by isolation and limited direct contact among workers, unlike traditional work settings, where frequent in-person meetings can foster work relationships and trust. Interpersonal isolation can impede the formation of social trust among peers (Duggan et al., 2020). Moreover, the uncertainties associated with gig labour, together with the absence of conventional employment advantages like job stability, health insurance, and retirement savings, might result in a decline in confidence in institutions that are seen as incapable of safeguarding the rights of gig workers (Bajwa et al., 2018).

3.3 Understanding Trust in the Hybrid Work Environment

Trust in the hybrid work environment involves a complex blend of human connections and technology-driven procedures. As such, trust becomes essential in a hybrid environment characterised by remote work and in-person contact, impacting collaboration, communication, organisational dynamics and overall performance (Ferrazzi & Ramalingam, 2021). Adopting the hybrid work paradigm necessitates a shift towards alternate manifestations of trust. Almost three decades ago, Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) argued that the need to rely on staff to achieve results, irrespective of their geographical location, is growing considerably. Effective communication becomes essential in a hybrid workplace where practical and coherent communication overcomes physical separation. Irrespective of employees' virtual reality and geographic location, they should feel informed, heard, and valued. Consequently, trust can be facilitated through communication by implementing collaborative technologies (Shockley & Hoover, 2017).

Trust in the hybrid work environment covers various aspects, such as trust in leaders, trust among team members, and trust in technology (Ferrazzi & Ramalingam, 2021). Trust in leadership is crucial for the effectiveness of hybrid work arrangements (D’Cruz & Noronha, 2019). Employees should be convinced that their leaders can navigate organisations through uncertainty and transition. According to Men, Qin, and Jin (2022), leadership competencies such as giving direction, empathy, and meaning making can enhance employee trust in leaders. Pianese et al. (2022) caution that trust-based relationships among remote workers gradually encourage trust with supervisors and peers. Trust eventually influences employees' overall welfare, productivity, job satisfaction, and organisational performance (Hurmekoski et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of virtual initiatives relies on creating and developing trust among team members (Lukić & Vračar, 2018). Trust in hybrid teams depends on proactively developing strong connections, building mutual admiration, and acknowledging and appreciating differences (Bartel et al. (2012). Pentland (2012) highlights the importance of informal and spontaneous encounters to enhance team trust. O’Leary et al. (2014) emphasise the importance of controlling hybrid work arrangements to maintain trust relationships between virtual teams. Breuer et al. (2016) found that trust in virtual teams is influenced by the degree of virtuality and the record-keeping of interactions. The study emphasises the necessity for a deeper understanding and conceptualization of virtuality and its impact on trust in diverse virtual environments with variable levels of technology use. Organisations should acknowledge the obstacles and complexities related to trust in virtual teams to oversee and promote trust efficiently. Trust in virtual project teams is also crucial for productivity and knowledge management. Hence, the barriers imposed by relying on physical presence for trust require a shift towards alternative forms of trust in hybrid work settings.

Trust in technology is essential in the hybrid work environment, where digital platforms and applications constitute the primary means of communication, collaboration, and production (Leonardi & Bailey, 2008). To operate with optimal efficiency and effectiveness, employees must trust these technologies' reliability, safety, and user-friendliness, irrespective of their physical location. Furthermore, confidence in technology is crucial in the hybrid work setting, where digital platforms and technologies serve as the main communication, collaboration, and efficiency methods. To achieve maximum productivity and efficiency, employees must have confidence in these technologies' dependability, security, and user-friendliness, irrespective of their physical whereabouts. Trust may be built by successfully establishing strong cybersecurity protocols, providing extensive training and assistance to users, and actively seeking input to continuously improve and optimise digital platforms and technology (Harward, 2021).

All combined, trust in the hybrid work environment is a multifaceted and ever-changing concept that impacts an organisation's culture, the level of employee involvement, and the company's overall effectiveness. Organisations may cultivate a collaborative and resilient work environment, where people flourish, innovate, and contribute to organisational success in the new world of work, by promoting trust in leadership, among team members, and in technology.

3.4 Making sense of the Complexity of Trust in the workplace

The available research on the individual and organisational outcomes of the hybrid world of work needs to be more conclusive. Research studies are similar in observations regarding the advantages and disadvantages of hybrid work environments. Gajendran et al. (2023) revealed that employees who perceived their management as trustworthy showed elevated job satisfaction and productivity levels. Trust enables individuals to assume responsibility for their tasks, exercise autonomous decision-making, and efficiently allocate their time. Nguyen et al. (2022), found that organisations that establish a culture characterised by trust are more inclined to retain talent, as employees exhibit more loyalty towards organisations that demonstrate confidence in their capabilities and honesty. Within the hybrid paradigm, trust assumes even greater significance in sustaining robust connections between employers and employees when in-person contacts are restricted. Trust facilitates more adaptability and equilibrium between work and personal life. A study by Kim and Stoner (2022) reveals that trust in remote work arrangements is associated with decreased stress levels and enhanced work-life balance, augmenting overall job satisfaction.

Trust in a hybrid work environment is delicate and should be diligently preserved to prevent erosion. Jones et al. (2023) highlight that trust can erode when individuals experience isolation or detachment from their colleagues, a prevalent obstacle in hybrid work relationships. Perceived loss of trust can result in disengagement, diminished collaboration, and a general decrease in organisational morale. According to Lee and Kramer (2023), the absence of regular face-to-face encounters in hybrid work environments can lead to misunderstandings and dampen team cohesion. Without frequent check-ins, trust can result in complacency when employees and supervisors presume alignment without independently checking it. In their study, Davis and Taylor (2023) contend that trust, although crucial, must be accompanied by explicit performance goals and mechanisms of accountability. However, there is a potential danger that specific individuals may exploit the confidence bestowed upon them, resulting in reduced efficiency and job excellence.

Rousseau et al. (1998) underline how transparency, sensitivity, and compassion define trust from its emotional features. Regarding the idea, one must show people trust by keeping a certain degree of personal vulnerability. This is so because people are ready to bear any losses or hazards depending on their faith in the reliability of others. Moreover, openness is a natural tendency to actively communicate ideas, knowledge, and emotions with trustworthy colleagues, fostering reciprocal honesty and gratitude. Using the knowledge and formation of links with emotions, viewpoints, and needs, empathy becomes crucial in improving interpersonal interactions and rapport (Rousseau et al., 1998).

Trust is important for efficiently constructing a framework that supports cooperation, information exchange, and participant participation in organisational environments (McEvly, Tortoriello, 2023). A study by Dirks and Ferrin (2022) offers more data supporting this point of view. Trust helps people and companies have confidence in their intentions and capabilities, promoting positive relationships. Building trust among people inside an organisation raises the likelihood of cooperation in gaining resources, organising activities to achieve common goals, and interacting constructively, according to the writers Gillespie and Dietz (2020). Moreover, trust helps people challenge accepted wisdom, probe ideas, and start initiatives without regard to criticism or reprisals, fostering an environment fit for innovation.

Moreover, trust improves company productivity using dispute resolution, cost control, and quickening of decision-making procedures (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). By creating an atmosphere that allows exact and efficient information transmission, dependable systems provide more openness in communication. Building trust helps companies properly promote helpful feedback, enabling them to find and fix relevant problems proactively. Furthermore, trust promotes effective conflict resolution and problem-solving by motivating people to cooperate and seek compromises to help all the stakeholders instead of turning to ineffective answers.

Moreover, the development of trust inside an organisation improves its potential to overcome obstacles, so fostering more flexibility, efficiency, and adaptability in effectively handling changes (Meyerson et al., 1996). Building trust helps institutions to properly overcome challenges, distribute resources wisely, and coordinate operations during times of crisis or uncertainty. Improving the fundamental values of a company depends mostly on trust, which also helps to build inclusiveness, loyalty, and devotion. Moreover, trust is very important for improving the position and reputation of a company by involving stakeholders and building durable connections.

3.4.1 Building trust through sense-making

Employees' perspective and perceptions of corporate environments are primarily influenced by the connection between trust and sensibility. Understanding this relationship enables businesses to design work settings that enhance the perspective of staff members on involvement and objectives (Maitlis & Christianson, 2024; Weick, 2023). Well-executed sense-making strategies improve general organisational efficiency using shared knowledge and alignment with the corporate goals, enhancing trust and general organisational effectiveness (Brown, Colville, & Pye, 2023). Clear communication, encouragement of group decision-making, and ensuring organisational narratives reflect employee viewpoints are the main signs of building confidence via sense-making (Balogun, Jacobs, & Jarzabkowski, 2024; Gioia, Patvardhan, & Hamilton, 2023). Based on empirical research, these ideas aim to improve trust sense-making through such approaches.

Promoting cooperation, inspiring innovation, and improving general organisational performance depend on building trust in the workplace. The need for trust is further highlighted in a hybrid work environment marked by workers spread over both remote and in-office locations. The lack of face-to-face contact and insufficient communication channels in a hybrid workplace could heighten the uncertainty and anxiety that trust helps to reduce (Choudhury, 2021; McKinsey, 2022). Establishing and maintaining confidence in many operating environments depends on good communication. Workers who fully grasp their roles, expected results, and operational goals are more likely to trust their managers and coworkers. This clarity is crucial in a geographically dispersed workforce as it reduces uncertainty and supports psychological stability—which is of great relevance (Harrington & Santiago, 2023).

Effective users of virtual collaboration technologies are more likely to believe these platforms to be useful. Such a degree of knowledge reduces uncertainty and improves trust in the hybrid working model, hence strengthening team confidence (Wang et al., 2021). The development of trust depends on building connections and prior interactions among team members. Teams who have a strong basis of trust before applying a hybrid approach are more likely to keep that trust. Those with a proven track record of successful teamwork are more likely to have reciprocal trust in a hybrid working environment (Naidoo & Leonard, 2020). This helps people define their preferred communication techniques and use past experiences. Companies with strong cultures marked by open communication and trust may use their cultural knowledge to boost confidence in a hybrid workplace. This means maximising the organisational values that give transparency, accountability, and help top priority—qualities essential for preserving confidence when staff members are not closely physically close. The

results of Burbach and Day (2023) show that companies that actively support their trust-based culture while switching to hybrid work experience have better success in maintaining high degrees of trust among their employees.

Personal contact and communication in a blended work environment depend on planned encounters and unstructured interactions—casual check-ins. All of these are rather important for maintaining confidence; structured interactions provide a platform for addressing work-related issues, setting clear expectations, and providing constructive criticism. On the other hand, unstructured encounters help to build interpersonal relationships—which are vital for building trust—which one can develop personally. Establishing and maintaining trust in the hybrid work environment depends on excellent personal communication. The quality and frequency of communication significantly affect team members' confidence levels (Oostervink, Agterberg, & Huysman, 202). Encouragement of open, honest, consistent communication helps to develop reliability and predictability—essential for building trust. Goleman (2020) claims that empathy is essential in communication as it allows people to grasp the emotional traits of others, hence reducing misinterpretation and promoting a harmonic workplace. Men (2021) recently did research that shows that open communication not only boosts confidence but also drives people to participate more actively and autonomously.

Studies show that when a company gives openness and clarity top priority, employees are more likely to trust their leaders and colleagues, increasing engagement and job happiness (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Hinds & Cramton, 2014). Open communication helps reduce uncertainty and create shared understanding, fostering trust (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). Gaining a better awareness of their responsibilities, commitments, and the goals of the company helps staff members feel more confident in their leaders and have stable jobs (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, & Fletcher, 2017.). Through constant communication of relevant information, capable leaders may promote openness and inspire staff members to be well-informed and evaluated (Holtz 2023). Moreover, they might actively assist employees in voicing their opinions (Costa, Fulmer, & Anderson, 2018) and show openness in their decision-making approach (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2022). By establishing clear expectations, providing regular feedback, and keeping consistent communication with the fundamental values and objectives of the company, leaders can also strengthen confidence (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Locke & Latham, 2019; Men, Qin, & Jin, 2021).

Lastly, effective sense-making helps to rebuild confidence beyond a simple understanding of the failure. Stakeholders have to show a genuine will for change if it is to take place (Sitkin & Möller, 2013). The company shows its ability to absorb information from the incident by describing the steps

taken to correct the privacy infringement and reduce the possibility of the following events. This builds trust as it shows that the company is working proactively to reach a future marked by dependability and safety.

3.5 Navigating trust issues in the hybrid Workplace

Among the several advantages of the hybrid office are more productivity and flexibility. However, this new paradigm also brings special difficulties, particularly regarding trust. A virtual work environment presents an inherent difficulty in terms of the possible out-of-sight, out-of-mind events. Both in-office and remote employees might cause virtual workers to see less value and visibility. Adoption of such a point of view might cause loneliness and lower confidence in the capacity of their managers to acknowledge their achievements (Michaelson, 2022). Moreover, in diversified surroundings, interruptions in communication might be common. Depending on email or virtual meetings when team members are geographically scattered might cause misinterpretation and mistakes. The absence of casual face-to-face contact (Gibson & Kong, 2021) is one possible challenge to efficient communication and teamwork in a conventional workplace environment.

Such cases of ineffective communication might foster an environment for the spread of distrust. Workers might start to doubt the dedication or output of their distant colleagues, which would foster a "in-group vs. out-group" attitude. According to Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999), companies have to make sure that every employee, wherever, is valued and given a voice. Moreover, a lack of openness regarding decision-making procedures might aggravate the mistrust as remote employees could consider themselves deprived of important knowledge (Matejko & Thatcher, 2023). In a hybrid organisational structure, how can companies effectively address trust problems and establish a coherent and dependable work environment? Here are some basic approaches:

By sufficiently defining expectations for both on-site and remote work, organisations may guarantee equal opportunities for success, independent of geographical location, therefore ensuring equal possibilities for success (Gratton et al., 2021). Moreover, developing explicit performance criteria that give results top importance instead of just attendance helps build trust by proving that contributions are appreciated, not simply in terms of length of time spent.

Overcoming the geographical distance between employees working in the office and those working remotely calls for the integration of efficient communication solutions like collaboration software and video conference platforms (Gibson & Kong, 2021). In a mixed work environment, managers and employees should get thorough communication instructions together. Engaging in this activity will

help one acquire abilities that include attentive listening, succinct and efficient communication, and the encouragement of inclusion in online conferences. To build trust and friendship among team members, even if remote work offers advantages, it is imperative to give organising frequent face-to-face team meetings or social activities top importance (Gratton et al. 2021). These gatherings allow for casual discussions and help to build relationships that are hard to copy in a virtual setting.

Transparency and inclusiveness should be given top priority by companies as open and readily available lines of communication for remote and office workers will help to guarantee fair access to knowledge (Matejko & Thatcher, 2023). This entails implementing policies to ensure openness in processes of decision-making and encouraging honest channels of contact to get comments and address problems. Furthermore, virtual meetings should encourage inclusivity so that people engaged remotely feel appreciated and respected.

Recent studies stressing the need for psychological safety in hybrid work contexts, where employees may experience perceptions of isolation or separation (Grant, 2020), support these conclusions. Therefore, leaders should develop confidence and competency as this is necessary for encouraging teamwork and creativity among team members working remotely or in a physical office environment (Edmondson, 2018). Moreover, research shows how much leaders need to be role models in forming the culture and building confidence inside a company (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leading with desired traits—such as openness, empathy, and responsibility—will help build trust and devotion among those working remotely (Walter et al., 21). Leaders in remote work environments should actively listen to remote employees' comments and concerns, claims Kirkman et al. (2020). This shows their dedication to worker welfare and diversity, therefore fostering a culture of openness and trust (Edmondson, 2019).

Leaders who want their workers to be trusted must show actions, including assigning tasks, giving autonomy, and providing help (Bailey & Ferner, 2016). Leaders also must be open in their contacts and own their actions. This creates the general mood for the whole company and promotes a confidence and dependability culture from the top down to the lowest level. Building trust in a mixed environment calls for using several approaches. By implementing new forms of trust based on output and communication, encouraging openness and inclusivity, and investing in technology to close the physical distance, companies may create a thriving and efficient workplace for their geographically scattered staff. Furthermore, leaders who routinely show faith in their peers and own accountability help to create a trustworthy and cooperative hybrid workplace. Lewis and Weigert (1985) claim that managers who show confidence in their far-off employees can properly transmit a significant message remains accurate. Giving remote workers autonomy and decision-making power helps supervisors show trust in their skills. This promotes psychological stability in which people feel free to engage in

risk-taking, ask questions, and own mistakes without regard to negative consequences (Edwardson, 1999).

3.6 Toward framework for trust in a hybrid workplace

Building upon the preceding sections, the authors developed a framework to demonstrate the process of establishing and sustaining trust in a hybrid work setting. The concept operates on the assumption that contextual elements, such as the consequences of the Covid-19 epidemic and the Fourth Industrial Revolution with its disruptive technologies, impact the hybrid workplace. Next to that, the organisational culture must be prepared to accept and adapt to the fast changes and continuous digital disruptions. Within this framework, it is imperative for the leadership of any business to demonstrate the necessary skills and capability to effectively guide people through the ever-changing and unpredictable realm of work. Leadership is the responsibility of establishing efficient functional domains, which include a psychologically secure work environment. This, in turn, should result in achieving performance objectives for both individuals and the organisation.

Effective communication is crucial in a hybrid work setting, whether through digital or in-person channels, to keep employees apprised of information that impacts their job responsibilities. A robust digital infrastructure is crucial for achieving effective communication, meeting performance objectives, and establishing a psychologically safe work environment. Robust digital technologies ensure seamless and uninterrupted communication among teams located in different geographical areas, therefore facilitating collaboration through video conferencing and instant messaging systems. A robust digital infrastructure also promotes inclusivity by ensuring that every member of the team, regardless of location, has equitable access to data and can actively participate in discussions. Enhancing team cohesiveness and productivity contributes to the achievement of performance requirements. Furthermore, a highly integrated digital infrastructure creates a psychologically safe work environment by promoting open and transparent communication, which in turn builds trust and encourages team members to engage without fear of being evaluated or reacted to.

Lastly, the functional domains are emphasised by fundamental principles such as kindness, dependability, openness, and understanding. The interactions between all the input variables and the components of the hybrid workplace eco-system collectively influence the trust relationships inside the workplace. It should be emphasised that trust is a dynamic notion that requires initiation, construction, maintenance, and reconstruction. The interdependent connection between the factors that enable hybrid work ecosystems, together with their functional and value systems, promotes trust,

leading to improved cooperation, job satisfaction, well-being, retention, and performance among employees.

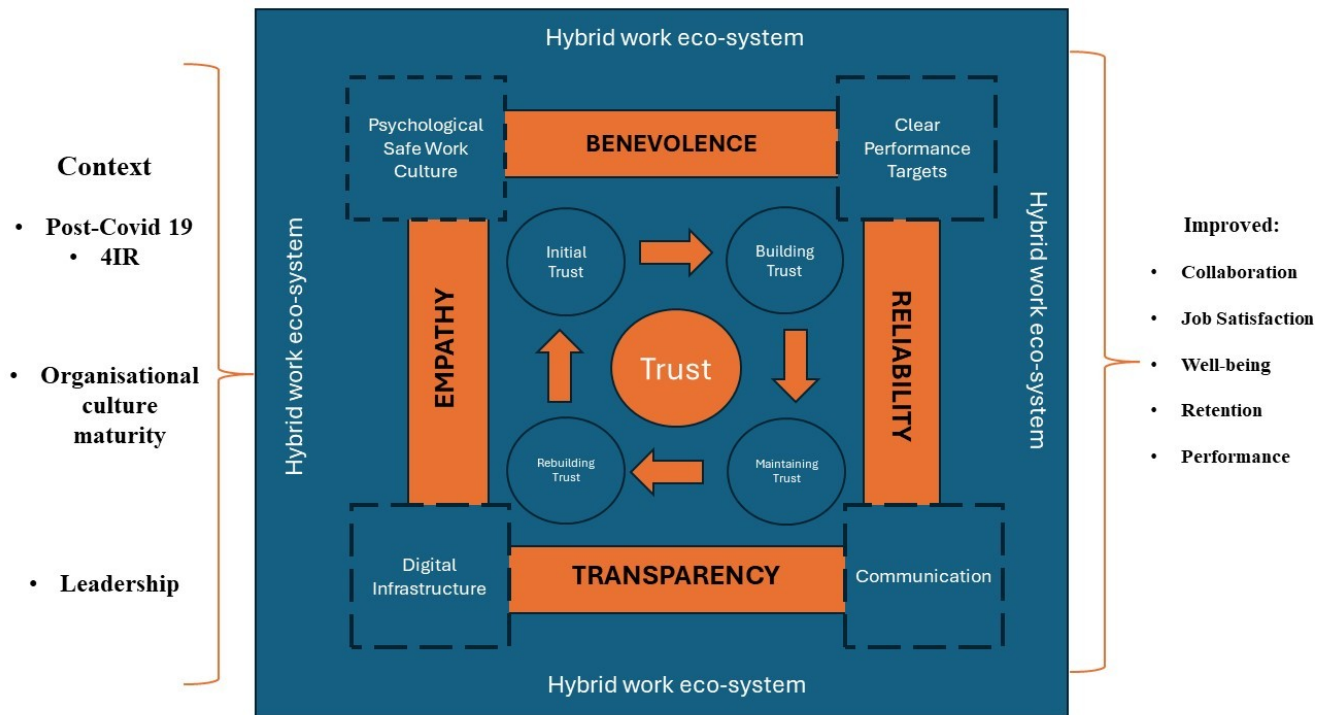


Figure 1: A Trust Model for a Hybrid work eco-system

Sources: Author’s own

4. Management Implications

The establishment of trust in the workplace has mostly been achieved through human interactions, visible behaviour, and established norms of organisational culture throughout history. However, the shift towards remote and hybrid work patterns has challenged these traditional assumptions, prompting organisations to reevaluate the principles of trust formation, maintenance, and evaluation in digital environments. The absence of physical proximity and direct supervision has given rise to new dimensions of trust, such as competence in communication technologies, digital literacy, and adaptability to remote work technology. Trust in the dynamic realm of hybrid work extends beyond just physical closeness and hierarchical structures, including virtual encounters, asynchronous communication channels, and cross-functional collaboration. Trust has expanded beyond the confines of the traditional workplace and is now an integral part of digital platforms, project teams, and decentralised decision-making networks. Trust plays a crucial role in facilitating effective collaboration, creativity, and organisational adaptability as companies embrace flexible and

independent work structures. Furthermore, the hybrid work environment presents several opportunities for fostering trust and collaboration, but it also contains unique challenges that require thoughtful deliberation. The convergence of professional and personal life, the prevalent phenomenon of digital exhaustion, and the possibility of misunderstandings in virtual settings all influence the development and maintenance of trust in hybrid work settings. In order to address these challenges, organisations should allocate resources towards technology infrastructure, promote digital literacy, and develop a culture that emphasises psychological safety and empathy.

5. Conclusion

In the rapidly evolving professional landscape characterised by hybrid workflows, remote cooperation, and digital interconnectedness, the traditional notion of trust is undergoing a substantial reassessment. Facilitated by worldwide occurrences like the COVID-19 epidemic, the shift towards hybrid work arrangements has fundamentally altered the dynamics of trust inside businesses. This shift necessitates a comprehensive understanding of trust within the framework of dispersed teams, virtual interactions, and flexible work-life boundaries. Therefore, in the dynamic business world, it is essential for companies to give priority to trust as they adjust to the dilemmas of the hybrid work environment. Through a redefinition of trust, organisations can strategically position themselves for sustained success and adaptability. Trust is a dynamic notion that adapts to changes in work arrangements, technology, and society. Through the adoption of a mentality centred on openness, responsibility, and cooperation, businesses can cultivate a climate of assurance that empowers people to thrive in hybrid work settings and provide significant contributions towards attaining organisational goals.

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