Succeeding in a Hybrid World

A PLAYBOOK FOR LEADERS

TILTCO

“

Success in hybrid requires leaders to re-imagine organizations - their look and feel, and how their teams come together. Then, rebuild with intention. Done right, there is limitless potential to create more inclusive, dynamic and effective work environments.

Tineke Keesmaat
Founder & CEO
Tiltco

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Unlock the potential of hybrid

Remote work was once a job perk for the few. COVID-19 changed that. Companies and their employees that tested remote work models during the pandemic now see it as a normal way to do business.

As a result, more companies plan to offer a more flexible mix of in-office and remote work. As they do, leaders are wondering how to unlock the full potential of hybrid.

82%

of leaders plan to permit remote work some of the time as employees return to the workplace[1]

37%

of companies expect to shift a quarter of their employees to hybrid environments[2]

55%

of employees prefer working remotely at least three days a week[3]

75%

of employees maintained or improved productivity on individual tasks when working remotely[4]

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Today's top performing companies are going hybrid

"We've always had mobile working at Siemens, but now we're taking it a step further. These changes will also be associated with a different leadership style, one that focuses on outcomes rather than on time spent at the office.[5]

Roland Busch
CEO
Siemens

"Shopify is a digital-by-default company. We will keep our offices closed until 2021 so we can rework them for this new reality. And, after that, most will permanently work remotely. Office centricity is over.[6]

Tobi Lutke
CEO
Shopify

"An immersive workspace is no longer limited to a desk in our Towers; the 9-to-5 workday is dead; and the employee experience is about more than ping-pong tables and snacks… The work-from-anywhere model will unlock new growth opportunities that will help us drive greater equality.[7]

Brent Hyder
President & Chief People Officer
Salesforce

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Why we created a playbook on hybrid specifically for leaders

Our goal is to help you be a better leader within the context of the next normal. In 2020, companies had to rapidly adapt to remote work. Out of necessity, team meetings went virtual, traditional 9-to-5 work days died, and leaders found themselves in deeply personal conversations with their teams.

Now, as we emerge from the pandemic, you have an opportunity and a clear call to action to intentionally consider what type of environment you want to create for your teams to enable them to achieve business objectives.

This dedicated leader guide is based on TILTCO's deep understanding of leaders' priorities and constraints, and our ability to create winning strategies and implementation plans that move companies forward. It includes insights and practical ideas gathered from a TILTCO Roundtable series, LeaderLab podcasts, and conversations with a number of business leaders.

It offers a starting point for you to re-imagine your organization to create an environment where team members thrive and deliver better business outcomes.

Join the conversation

Share your experiences with hybrid with us.

LinkedIn

Twitter

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Your leadership framework for hybrid

Re-imagine what's possible

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Re-imagine what's possible

> “
>
> Let's accept that we are in a completely new paradigm. Rather than simply recreate the pre-pandemic organization, let's really re-imagine a new future in the whitespace that the pandemic has created.

Janeen Speer
Vice President of Talent
Shopify

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Re-imagine
what's possible

Many companies cultivated culture within office spaces and traditional 9-to-5 constructs. Overnight that all changed. The pandemic forced organizations to move to remote work with little to no planning. New technologies were deployed and new ways of working were tested.

As a result, a more flexible idea of work was unlocked. Looking ahead, leaders have a unique opportunity to re-imagine their organization and redesign it with intention – all to achieve tomorrow’s business objectives.

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STEP 1

Refresh your strategy for a post-pandemic world

The pandemic "shocked" almost every organization. Some industries were decimated. Others experienced unprecedented growth. Demand for certain products spiked, while others halted. Supply chains were interrupted. How we worked changed forever.

Re-imaging your organization starts with revisiting your core vision and strategy.

- Has your overall vision – the ultimate goal or destination for your company – changed?
- Has your overall strategy – where and how you compete – changed? How?
- How has your overall industry shifted? What shifts are permanent and which were temporary responses specific to COVID-19?
- How have your customer needs and expectations evolved?
- What will it take to achieve these objectives? What is new or different?
- How will different models of work enable you to achieve this vision?

Starting with what you want to achieve will enable you to determine the best way to achieve it.

Are your pandemic pivots permanent?

Companies of all sizes have adapted rapidly to the pandemic. Some of these pivots have shown incredibly positive results. Others were a "fix" to meet short-term pressures. The question to ask now: Are our pivots permanent?

- As local shops and farmers rapidly and unexpectantly moved online to stay alive, Shopify pivoted to offer these entrepreneurs a suite of services including expense management, bill payment and delivery optimization.[8]
- With Spotify's primary revenue source of paid advertising threatened, it pivoted to offer original content through podcasts with great success.[8]
- When gyms saw their doors shut, many like Orange Fitness, Planet Fitness and 24-hour Fitness turned to live-streaming of its classes.[9]

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STEP 2

Define your go-forward culture

Leaders have a unique opportunity to redefine how they want their organizations to look and feel.

No longer bound by traditional work constructs, leaders can re-imagine every level of their organization. Everything from how you reconfigure your physical office to how leaders and teams communicate and engage to where talent is sourced.

To do this, take time to reflect.

- Do your company values need to be revisited in the context of your shifting strategy or work context?
- What is your aspirational culture?
- How do you want your employees to feel as they work for your future company?
- How do you maintain some of the agility, flexibility and prioritization the pandemic forced your organization to adopt?
- What skills do you need to attract? Where can you tap into this talent pool – locally, or in new communities or regions?

Capture “good learnings”

The pandemic showed many leaders a new side of their organizations. Rapid decisions were made. Priorities were clear and relentlessly managed. Actions trumped analysis paralysis. Well-being was front and centre. It’s now time to ask: How do we maintain the “good learnings” of these new ways of working?

It was amazing how fast we operated. People cut through levels, politics and complexity to ensure that we pivoted overnight to get everyone safely and productively set up at home.

Jacqui McGillivray
EVP & Chief People Officer
Element Fleet

Hear more on LeaderLab

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Engage employees in the conversation

Employee feedback can guide you as you re-imagine your future. Ask: What do team members want? What do they need? What pain points are they experiencing?

Technology can help:

- Use Survey Monkey to create personalized surveys
- Use standard surveys like Shift or Culture Amp to understand what's work or not working today
- Try Zoom, Microsoft Teams or new tools like Lobby to conduct virtual focus groups
- Experiment with discussion management platforms like ThoughtExchange, a virtual conversation platform, to engage in dialogue

SurveyMonkey · zoom · thoughtexchange · Culture Amp · Microsoft Teams · LOBBY · shift

"To get this right, organizations need to listen carefully to what it is their particular employees need and want to be successful. Then, target their design to meet those needs.

Mike Ross
Chief HR Officer
Simons

"Encourage dialogue. Don't expect that it's a one and done where you send out a message once. You have to encourage the response back. Ask them questions. Ask them to react back to what you're saying.

Gillian Smith
Managing Partner
NATIONAL

Hear more on LeaderLab

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STEP 3

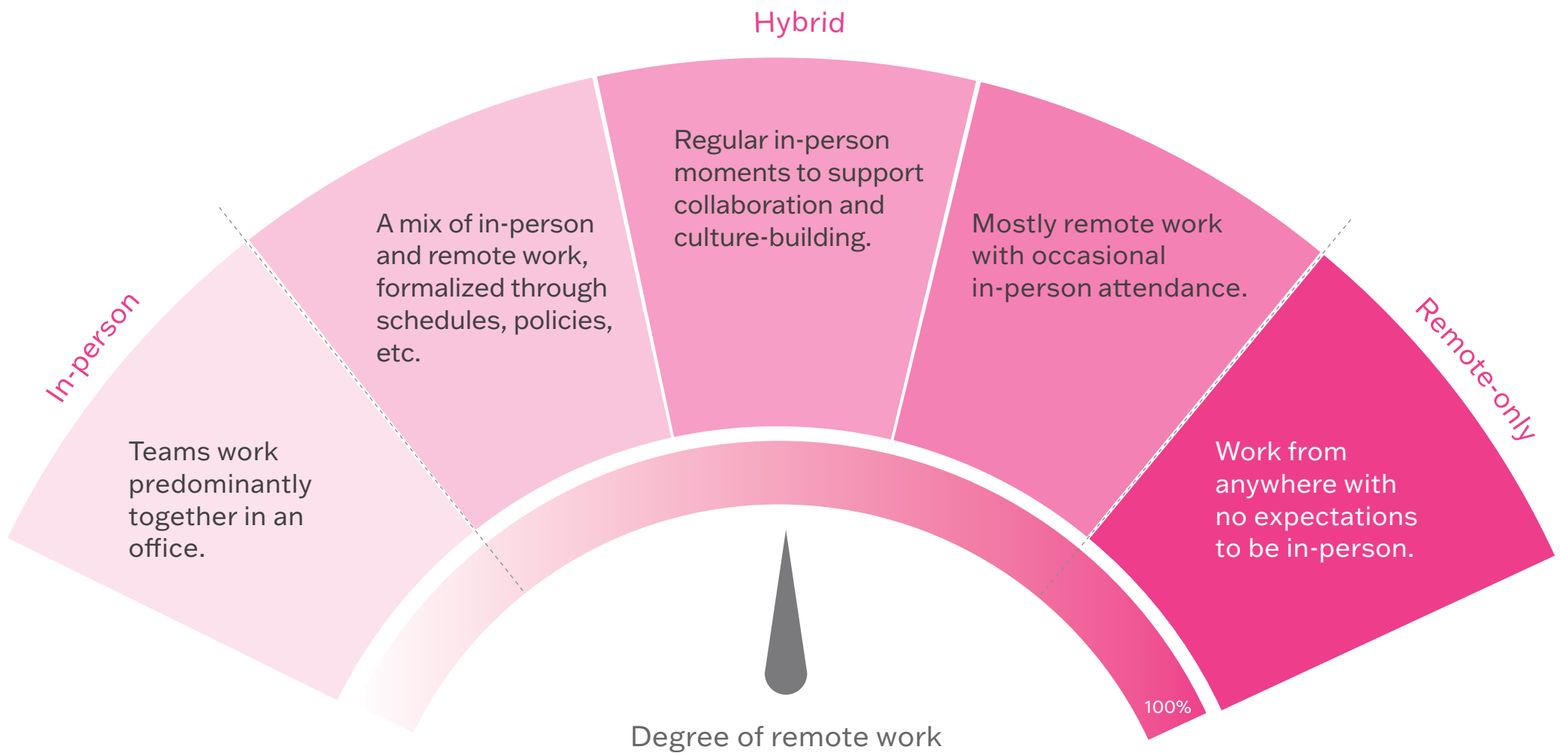
Declare your version of hybrid

Hybrid work environments are not new. Organizations across many fields have tested and adapted different models over the years. Here's what we know: There is no perfect model. Instead you need to customize a model to fit your business needs, and your strategic and organizational aspirations.

Consider which model will:

+ Best enable your business goals
+ Unlock the culture you are trying to create
+ Provide a talent sourcing and retention advantage
+ Suit the type of work your teams do
+ Fit your geographic footprint
+ Meet your customer expectations

What does hybrid mean for your organization?



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Rebuild with intent

> “The companies that think about hybrid really carefully for their populations, ensuring what's appropriate for specific jobs and the company's competitive situation, can gain real advantages.

Sarah Sonnenfeld
Principal
Alsephina Consulting

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Rebuild
with intent

Once a model is selected, leaders will need to clearly define the model for their organization, adjusting their underlying systems, tools and processes to make it work. All from the start.

Hybrid impacts everything. Success, then, requires reconfiguring structures, systems, processes and tools to enable your new working model. Leaders need to engage a cross-functional team – one that can assess the real implications inherent in each model, consider necessary trade-offs, and chart an implementation path.

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STEP 4

Redesign your organization

Starter questions to redesign your organization

Finance

- What model gives the right cost/ benefit trade-offs?
- What are the costs to set up and maintain the new hybrid model?

Legal and regulatory

- What are the legal impacts of your selected model?
- Are there safeguards that need to be added?

Tools, technology and cybersecurity

- Do you have the right cyber security systems in place?
- How do you strengthen technology security for remote employees?
- What is the home office technology set-up? Is it company or employee selected?
- What technology is required to enable seamless two-way communications and connections?

Real estate

- How do you reconfigure your office space to accommodate the new model?
- Do you need to sell existing space or rent new space?
- Do employees need special equipment to work from home (e.g., privacy or productivity tools)?

People strategy processes

- What is the impact for our overall employee value proposition?
- How do we think about compensation and benefits for mixed models of work?
- What does this mean for how we source and recruit talent?
- Will employees decide when and where they will work?
- What skills do leaders need to thrive in a hybrid work model? How do we rapidly build these skills?
- How do we develop, mentor and coach employees working in different ways?

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CASE STUDY

Don't simply virtualize today. Create it anew.

One participant in our roundtable discussions, shared this simple example:

Upon moving to remote work during the initial pandemic lockdown, the company wanted to preserve as many of its much-loved cultural rituals as possible. One of these was the practice of catered lunches. Their team feverishly brainstormed ideas to provide employees with a company-sponsored meal.

A practical solution was found only when the team stepped back and asked: What is the purpose of this ritual? The food was always fun, but the true purpose of the lunch was to inspire connectivity.

Identifying the explicit purpose allowed the team to create new ways to connect in the remote environment.

> **Things as simple as your at-home set up, access to a high-end microphone or speaker, and good lighting can change the experience for the individual speaking as well as others listening. Practically, that means leaders must proactively provide individuals with the proper equipment.**

Melanie Espeland
CEO and Executive Voice Coach
Espeland Enterprises

Hear more on LeaderLab

Set people up for success

Technology can help everyone show up well. You'll avoid annoying meeting mishaps, individuals can bring their best selves forward, and team members can connect more seamlessly. Consider providing tech start-up kits for new team members, running online training or adding virtual equipment to permitted expenses.

+ Ring lights create a more professional atmosphere
+ High-quality cameras positioned at eye level build trust
+ High-end microphones provide sound clarity
+ White noise machines block out background noise
+ Sit-stand desks allow employees to adjust their work position throughout the day

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STEP 5

Communicate your new reality

As teams adopt new work models, they need to be united by a strong commitment to the ways of working. It's important to draft specific policies and approaches to clarify your chosen hybrid model.

Teams need to understand why the model was chosen and how they fit within it. They also need clear objectives on their role and the new rules of engagement.

This clarity will help teams transition to the new model quicker while supporting their well-being and productivity on the job.

Get thinking about:

- Why is this the right model?
- Does everyone work in the same mode?
- What degree of choice do employees have in the model?
- What are the very specific policies supporting the new model?
- How is it different from what was done previously?
- What will it take to make it work?
- What new norms are required in this model?

"The greatest risk in a hybrid workplace is that expectations are not clear right at the start.

Lisa Dymond
Partner and Head of Talent
Altas Partners

"You have to be confident that your people understand the norms of the workplace. That is, what you want your company to be and how you want to work together. This is much harder to do if you have different blends of people, and so it's important to think through.

John King
Managing Partner
Special Circumstances Partner

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Transform to hybrid successfully

Moving – or formalizing – your hybrid model will likely be a significant transformation to how your teams work and leaders lead. Transformative change isn't easy.

Increase your likelihood of success:

- Share concrete plans with your managers and teams
- Communicate openly and across the organization
- Role model the behaviour changes you're asking your teams to make
- Involve team members in concrete ways

"There are many glamorous parts of change, but it's important to remember change is a long-term endeavour made up of what I call 'zero glam' work that makes change sustainable, and helps people really lean into the change and deliver it."

Dr. Elsbeth Johnson
Senior Lecturer
MIT Sloan School of Management

2x

Success rate of a transformation more than doubles when organizations follow a rigorous, action-oriented approach.[10]

8x

Success rate of transformations with consistent and continuous communications.[10]

5.3x

Success rate of transformations where leaders role-model new behaviours.[10]

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Reset your team

> “Leaders will need to ask: How can we communicate in a way that feels inclusive for both the people in the office and those working remotely? How can we create the same amount of collaboration and sense of ownership across the employee base?

Phil Arrata
Former CEO of MEC

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Reset
your team

Hybrid will reshape how you communicate and connect with your teams. With two or more fundamentally different employee experiences, leaders will need to engage in new ways to foster inclusion, trust and connection. And, like all big changes in organizations, getting team members to understand them and work in new ways will require thoughtful investments.

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STEP 6

Communicate often, connect deeply

Hybrid has increased the urgency to get communications right. As a leader, you need to communicate more and in new ways. This includes building connections at a human level. Team members need to know and feel safe on their teams. They also need to trust you and each other.

+ Set up formal communication mechanisms – at the company or organization level, and within work teams.
+ Set, communicate and track clear objectives so people know what they can expect from each other and when.
+ Encourage two-way dialogue with tools like Mentimeter, PollEv, Slideo, ThoughtExchange.
+ Rethink team meetings and stimulate group dialogue by mixing synchronous and asynchronous formats.
+ Use video to enhance learning with platforms like Biteable, Vyond, Loom or others.
+ Invest in personal connections. Think coffee chats, scheduled office hours.
+ Pulse check often. Add well-being checks to meeting agendas or use tools like SHIFT for more detailed feedback.
+ Build camaraderie by sending physical items to team members or set up fun events for employees to enjoy no matter where they sit.

The upside of hybrid communications

Some leaders have discovered the benefits of communicating on hybrid teams.

+ Technology enables inclusiveness. Leaders are finding it easier to connect regularly with team members located in all geographies and at all levels.
+ More authentic connections. Working from personal spaces allows leaders and teams to “just be themselves” – eliminating the formalities that can create detachment.
+ Better conversations. Small screens have disciplined leaders to hone their messaging and create slides with impact.

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STEP 7

Reboot leaders to lead in new ways (this includes you!)

Hybrid will demand a new, more human-centric approach to leadership.

Leaders at every level will need to:

- Set a clear vision and connect it to each and every individual
- Manage outcomes, not employees' time
- Develop personal resiliency
- Build trust throughout your organization
- Learn to coach managers and teams – no matter where they sit
- Support team members' well-being
- Know how to build inclusive teams

"There's a lot of informal feedback mechanisms when working in the office together. Whereas remote employees – you have no idea. So, it's important to keep track of well-being and to do that more frequently, so we can more quickly focus attention when something falls off course.

Stephen Redwood
Founder
Redwood Advisory Partners

"Leaders need to change their mentality and make sure they are task and results driven as opposed to process driven.

Fiona Lake Waslander
COO and Co-founder
Skylight

"Managers need to explicitly talk about trust. It can be as simple as ending a meeting by offering a simple framework on trust and asking the team to rate themselves based on it. Sometimes even bringing up the topic openly creates a bit of trust.

Aneta Key
Strategic Growth Advisor
Aedea Partners LLC

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Set managers up for success

In hybrid, the role of middle manager cannot be underestimated. They serve as the linchpin to the organization, connecting their teams to each other and to the company and its leaders. Leaders, need to prepare managers.

- Redefine and reposition managers as true people leaders – clearly outlining the objectives and priorities of their new role.
- Invest in manager training that focuses on the foundational skills people leaders need: delegating, personal resiliency, leading in uncertainty, managing team well-being.
- Create channels and forums for this cohort to connect directly together.
- Coach and mentor managers to encourage their transformation from supervisors to people leaders.

> **You have to show managers that it matters, that they should want to change and need to change. Coach them and then give them a checklist. It's simple, but it showcases what they should be striving towards.**

Nils Boeffel
Digital strategy and agile transformation consultant

> **Succeeding in a hybrid work environment requires a lot from managers. It's a new way of leading and thinking about their job that they can't entirely transition to on their own.**

Susan Charnaux
Principal and Founder
Fairhill Ventures

65%
of managers want training to manage staff in remote work environments[11]

63%
of employees and leaders want to upskill soft skills (people skills, problem solving, etc.)[11]

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Get ready to lead in a new way

Leadership matters. This is especially true in times of transition and transformation. As you prepare to move your teams to hybrid, first assess your personal readiness for the change.

To start, reflect on these questions:

- What biases might I hold about how ‘great work’ looks. How can these ideas get in the way of our success with hybrid?
- How strong are my leadership skills and experiences to lead in hybrid? Do I have gaps? How will I close them?
- Are there specific individuals or parts of my team I’m concerned may not be successful in a hybrid model? How will I proactively manage these?
- How am I personally feeling about this upcoming change after a period of great uncertainty? Do I have the energy to tackle this next set of challenges? What can I do to boost my energy?

“You can be an incredibly smart individual, but if there’s no caring, if there’s no engagement, things are simply not going to work. I think if you bring that caring, that bit of empathy and compassion, it’s absolutely foundational to good leadership, particularly in trying times.

Dr. Gerard Seijts
Executive Director
Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership at the Ivey Business School

Hear more on LeaderLab

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STEP 8

Learn and adjust

Hybrid isn't a new concept. The scale and speed in which it's being embraced is. As leaders reset their organizations to work in a new way, it's important to remember you won't get it perfect. Embrace the imperfections as a way to constantly adjust it to the needs of your business and employees.

- Set up clear measures for your hybrid organization's health - employee satisfaction, key people measures like turnover and sourcing metrics are all good indicators
- Check in with team members through one-on-ones, surveys and/or discussion platforms to hear what's working and what's not
- Continuously look for better ways to enable team members. Pilot new technologies and ways of working
- Share your own experiences with the model - what's working and what's not

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In hybrid, the possibilities are endless. Yet, change can be uncertain. And, it's rarely easy. As you look ahead, remember the pandemic has already shown how resilient, creative and willing you and your teams can be. Take this moment to step into the unknown with humility, creativity and knowing that testing something new can make a difference - even if it doesn't work the first time. Good luck and let us know how TILTCO can help.

Tineke Keesmaat
Founder & CEO
Tiltco

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Contributors

Jay Altizer

Phil Arrata

Will Bachman

Nils Boeffel

Bernard Borowski

Susan Charnaux

Kelly Duffin

Lisa Dymond

Melanie Espeland

Jennifer Hartz

Rashay Jethalal

Aneta Key

John King

Agnes Kunkel

Fiona Lake Waslander

Stephen Redwood

Mike Ross

Amanda Setili

Sarah Sonnenfeld

Janeen Speer

Reid Wuntke

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Endnotes

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About TILTCO

TILTCO is a boutique consulting company that helps leaders define and execute their strategies in order to achieve extraordinary business and personal results. Founded by Tineke Keesmaat, she brings her 20 years of leadership consulting experience rooted at McKinsey & Company and Accenture to support today's leaders achieve exceptional results.

Review our latest thinking about hybrid workplaces

Learn to be an inspiring leader with the LeaderLab podcast

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